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**THE STRATEGIC AND
COMMUNITY SAFETY RESPONSE
TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN A
RURAL AREA**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the Northumbria University for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Northumbria University
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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a criminological exploration on the impact rurality has on both the strategic and community safety response to domestic violence. It also considers how rurality affects the delivery of services and subsequently victims' experiences. The thesis explores the relationship between service provider's views – police, housing, probation etc – of victims' experiences of domestic violence in a rural area, and their perceptions of the service and strategic response to domestic violence in rural Northumberland. It is set in the context of the relationship between partners from the voluntary and statutory sector, especially criminal justice agencies and how they work from a strategic and operational level in addressing domestic violence. Incorporated within this framework is how, from a strategic level, the governance of domestic violence has been addressed from a criminal justice and Local Authority perspective. The thesis includes an analysis of the Domestic Violence Forums and the implications for partnership working within a two tier Local Authority structure. This analysis will also incorporate an examination of the police response to domestic violence both at an operational and strategic level and how the Domestic Violence Forums and the police linked with Local Authorities and in particular the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). The unfolding analysis will inform our understanding of how the distinct factors of rurality impact on the nature and extent of domestic violence and the strategic and community safety response.

From a theoretical perspective the main influence is drawn from feminist ideology especially radical and socialist strands. An analysis of these strands developed an understanding of issues such as women's oppression and patriarchy especially in relation to domestic violence. Also an analysis of the theory of rurality was undertaken so as to understand the complexities of the term 'rural' and how a single definition of rurality is fraught with difficulties. Because of this difficulty a framework of classifications of rural has been constructed for the purposes of this thesis.

The research methods used for the thesis included semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and victims of domestic violence. A general review of the domestic

violence literature was undertaken as well as a review of literature related to themes such as partnership working, community safety and victimology. There was also an analysis of published and unpublished literature such as government circulars, minutes from Domestic Violence Forums and CDRP meetings and funding bids.

There are four key themes to emerge from the research which are; the police response, partnership working, distance and time and cultural differences. Whilst some of the findings to emerge in these categories reflect issues relevant to both rural and urban areas, there are some specific to rural areas. The conclusion to the thesis will identify and discuss these issues in greater detail.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This PhD focuses on the impact rurality has on both the strategic and community safety response to domestic violence, whilst also considering how rurality affects the delivery of services and subsequently victims' experiences. What actually constitutes rurality is difficult to define. However, the thesis has developed a framework, based on the literature, which divides rural into five different classifications; those being urban rural, differentiated rural, extreme and intermediate rural, rural idyll and official rural. These classifications have been applied to Northumberland so that the differing geographical landscape of the County can be understood. This will assist in interpreting the findings and foster an appreciation of, how and why, specific themes emerge from the research.

This introductory chapter outlines both the intention and contribution this thesis will make to the existing academic research on domestic violence. Informing this research are the views of stakeholders drawn from the statutory and voluntary sector, including criminal justice and community safety personnel. Their views have been examined to assist in developing an understanding of the issues which are specific to rural areas in relation to tackling domestic violence. Specific issues of interest are 'community,' 'transport networks,' the 'structure of service provision' and the 'partnership' approach to delivery of strategic initiatives. This thesis is timely and will contribute to the emerging literature focusing on rurality, partnership working and domestic violence in rural Northumberland.

Reflexivity

My varied background, in terms of employment, has impacted on how I have approached the research and data analysis. I had lived in a rural area up to and including the time of the research. However, due to employment, mainly during my

time in the construction industry, I had worked in more urbanised inner city areas. It was, however, my career change and subsequent employment which gave me a more in-depth insight into the impact rurality has on service provision and victims of crime, especially those suffering from domestic violence. This was complemented by my academic studies.

The link between service provision, rurality and domestic violence was forged during my time working for the Probation Service as a Groupwork Tutor. Part of my work included delivering, with colleagues, the DIVERT Programme for perpetrators of domestic violence. This work gave me a more in-depth understanding of the issues surrounding domestic violence both from a perpetrator and victim's perspective, which included the different forms of abuse i.e. violence, economic and emotional. It also encompassed areas such as why women find it difficult to leave abusive partners and the motives of perpetrators when abusing their partner. Moreover, given the nature of the countryside, perpetrators wishing to access Programmes needed to travel considerable distances and, in some cases, were totally reliant on public transport. This scenario raised issues of distance and time. My contact with victims' organisations was mainly through Women's Aid. It was through conversations, with colleagues, that it became apparent that there was a lack of services for victims of domestic violence in rural areas. Moreover, these conversations underpinned my personal experience of rural areas.

The issue of provision of services for victims, distance and time became more of a concern when I changed employment and became a Development Worker for the local Drug Action Team (DAT). My period of employment with the DAT coincided with the research for the thesis. Also, during this time, I became involved in attempts to increase services for victims of domestic violence and subsequent strategic initiatives. Also I was actively involved in the local CDRPs and Domestic Violence Forums. This gave me an insight into the mechanics of partnership working including different working cultures, vested interests and the implications to partnership working arising from a two-tier local government arrangement.

It would unfair to say that my experience of rurality and knowledge acquired through employment did not impact on the research and data analysis. There is no doubt that it did, especially during data analysis. Having lived in a rural area I was acutely aware that service provision in general was inadequate, and distance and time were factors needing consideration in everyday life. Reliance on public transport also meant that issues relating to distance and time became occupational hazards of rural life. I was also aware of how close knit rural communities can have both positive and negative connotations: support in some instances and stigma and isolation in others. Rural living also made one aware there were undercurrents of racism, hierarchies of class, sexism and a fear of difference which impacted on those who suffered because of their race, class and gender. Therefore, when analysing the data I already had an understanding of what interviewees were trying to articulate based on my knowledge and experiences. However, I was conscious that this did not affect my interpretation of the data. Overall, my experience and understanding of rurality has been a contributory factor in the researching of this thesis as well as giving an enlightened appreciation of the wide ranging academic literature associated with the topic.

The Nature and Extent of Domestic Violence

Over the past four decades domestic violence has moved from being 'hidden' to recognised as unacceptable and a crime (Dobash and Dobash 1979, Kelly 1999, Mirrlees-Black 1999, Pizzey 1974). This has been achieved by continuous campaigning from the women's movement, by developments in the political system including the introduction of legislation and through research and evaluations by academics and organisations (Dobash and Dobash 1979, Edwards 1989, Hague 2000, Home Office 2004a, Mooney 1993). This has also been driven by an increased demand for services from victims of domestic violence. Historically the police had taken a lead in tackling domestic violence, albeit reluctantly. Incremental changes since the 1970s have led to a more contemporary partnership approach and a shared responsibility in tackling domestic violence. However, the true scale of domestic violence is still unknown, despite a vast array of academic and scholarly literature, as many incidents continue to go unreported for a number of reasons (Dominy and Radford 1996, Mirrlees-Black 1999). Moreover, until recently much research on

domestic violence has been urban centred and the focus has only recently shifted to encompass the rural aspect.

Definitions of domestic violence started to emerge in the early 1970s after victims, who had suffered for years, broke their silence on the extent of abuse suffered which in the past had been denied or minimized (Dobash and Dobash et al 2000). The extent and nature of the problem started to become more apparent with the establishment of refuge provision for women suffering from domestic violence (Pizzey 1974); and the continued campaigning by the women's movement saw domestic violence recognised at both local and national levels (Dobash and Dobash 1992, Hoyle 2008, Wilcox 2006).

Women's experiences and data collection from local and national sources have assisted in developing an understanding of what constitutes domestic violence, its nature and impact and the power relations between intimate partners. There are, however, many reasons as to why abuse may be perpetrated against women, but Dobash and Dobash (1992) identify four main areas. These are possessiveness; jealousy; men's expectations concerning women's domestic work and men's sense of right to punish. Domestic violence relates to physical and abusive force which in turn leads to a range of abusive and controlling behaviours which can take the form of psychological, emotional, financial and sexual abuse. Psychological effects include stress, lack of sleep, and weight loss or gain, (Stanko 1985, Walker 1985). Kelly (2001) also includes humiliation, degradation, deception, sexual objectification and stalking as other forms of abuse (Douglass and Dutton 2001, Pence and McDonnell 2000, Tjaden and Thoennes 2001). Recognition needs to be given to the fact that many of these behaviours are not criminal offences, therefore creating difficulties for victims and prosecutors.

The changing definitions of domestic violence were also influenced by academic literature and none more so than the Duluth power and control wheel which became one of the most used tools for defining domestic violence (Pence and McDonnell 2000). The wheel is used to assess the behaviour of male perpetrators and therefore Duluth refers to the victim as female when identifying different behaviours. Duluth

identifies power and control as the key factors of domestic violence; with the exertion of male power used to control all aspects of their partner's behaviour. As part of the power and control wheel Duluth identifies a further eight sub-segments of the wheel, all of which, in one way or another, contribute to domestic violence or abuse. These include different forms of intimidation, isolation, emotional abuse, minimising behaviour, economic abuse and using male privilege (Ibid). Whilst all these forms of abuse cannot be incorporated into a single working definition of domestic violence and abuse, they still play a fundamental role in identifying and explaining what constitutes domestic violence.

The problem arising from different perspectives and interpretations is that there is no consistent definition of what constitutes domestic violence which is embraced by all relevant agencies. Without a common and agreed definition this has implications for research and the monitoring and recording of domestic violence (Crisp and Stanko 2001).

Agencies have different definitions which reflect their organisational roles and responsibilities (Richards, Letchford and Stratton 2008). The need for an agreed definition was highlighted in the response to the governments Safety and Justice Consultation on domestic violence (Home Office 2003d). This led to an official Home Office definition of domestic violence which is; 'any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality' (Home Office 2004b). Police forces in England and Wales have adopted the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) definition which reads; 'any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 18 or over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality' (ACPO 2004).

The Women's Aid definition is different again and states; 'domestic violence is physical, sexual, psychological or financial violence that takes place within an intimate or family-type relationship and that forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. This can include forced marriage and so-called 'honour crimes'.

Domestic violence may include a range of abusive behaviours, not all of which are, in themselves, inherently violent (www.womensaid.org.uk).

The recognition of cultural difference by Women's Aid is important, especially in light of increased publicity surrounding forced marriage and honour crimes which resulted in the creation, by the Home Office, of the Forced Marriage Unit in 2005. Whilst not suggesting that the Home Office and ACPO change their definitions again to recognise cultural difference, there needs to be acknowledgement and awareness that forced marriage and honour crimes do constitute domestic violence and abuse.

Confusion also arises as to what an individual identifies as violent or abusive behaviour. For example, one victim may not see the control of finances by their partner as a form of abuse, while another may (Burke et al 2001, Kearney 2001). Moreover, the violence and abuse may become accepted over time if family and agency interventions have not proved to be successful (Hanmer 2000).

Due to the complex nature of inter personal violence it is difficult to agree a fixed definition as to exactly what constitutes domestic abuse. However, there can be little doubt that the current definitions used by the Home Office and ACPO are a vast improvement from the 'just a domestic' notion of the past. Moreover, the recognition that domestic violence is not just physical but is also psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional, can only be beneficial to victims of such abuse who have suffered in the past. This research uses the Home Office definition which closely matches that used by most partners interviewed during the research. In addition, it addresses feminist concerns that the abuse is more than just physical and incorporates many different aspects of abusive behaviours.

In the United Kingdom domestic violence is responsible for between 16-25% of all recorded violent crime (BCS 2008/09, Dobash and Dobash 1980, Dodd et al 2004, Home Office 2004). Furthermore, an incident of domestic violence is reported to the police every minute of the day (Home Office 2010, Stanko 2000). However, evidence suggests that 9 in 10 domestic violence incidents in the United Kingdom are not reported to the police (Dominy and Radford 1996, Mirrlees- Black 1999). Statistics

on the Women's Aid website, posted in 2007, claim that BCS statistics underestimate domestic violence by 140% (www.womensaid.org.uk).

This under reporting of domestic violence leads some to advocate that incidents of domestic violence are possibly greater than any other crime (Dobash and Dobash 1979, Hanmer and Stanko 1985, Worrall and Pease 1986). Subsequently, Edwards (1986) suggests that domestic violence is the biggest 'blind spot' in crime statistics meaning the true extent of domestic violence is not known. A further insight into the extent of domestic violence in the United Kingdom can be drawn from the National Domestic Violence Helpline (run by Women's Aid and Refuge) who received just over a quarter of a million telephone calls in the first twelve months. During 2006-2007 the Helpline answered on average 387 calls per day. This equated to 500 a day on weekdays, 250 and 200 on Saturday and Sunday respectively (www.womensaid.org.uk). Homicide statistics reveal that on average two women are killed each week by their current or former male partner. This figure equates to approximately one third of all female victims of homicide (Department of Health 2005, Home Office 1999, Povey 2004, 2005).

Women are the most likely to suffer domestic violence. For example, 45% of women and 26% of men experience at least one incident of domestic violence during their lives. However, in a situation where there is a record of more than four incidents against a person, 89% of these victims are women. In addition, women over the age of 16 years are more likely than men to suffer multiple incidents of violence and abuse which includes sexual violence (Walby and Allen 2004), family abuse, sexual assault and stalking (Coleman et al 2007). Romkens (1997) found that 20-25% of all women experienced physical assault by their partner or ex-partner during their lifetime. This rose to 30% if the figure included incidents of forced sex. There is also a higher risk of violence during separation periods (Walby and Myhill 2001) and also an increased risk of sexual assault (Bergen 1999). Victimisation rates are also two and a half times higher for pregnant women (Stanko et al 1998). Research suggests that 30% of domestic violence starts during pregnancy (Lewis and Drife 2005, 2001, McWilliams and McKiernan 1993). Moreover, domestic violence is identified as one of the main causes of miscarriage or still births (Mezey and Bewley 1997), and

maternal deaths during childbirth (Lewis and Drife 2005, 2001). Whereas Taft (2002) suggests that between four and nine in every one thousand women are abused during or after the birth of their child.

The extent of the violence women suffer is more dangerous and physical in its nature and women are more likely than men to suffer repeat victimisation (Dobash and Dobash 2004, Kimmel 2002, Saunders 2002, Walby and Allen 2004). The type of violence women suffer as opposed to men includes being beaten up, choked, strangled, threatened with a weapon, sexually assaulted, more likelihood of death, injuries which need referred to accident and emergency departments and hospitalised (Archer 2000, Gadd et al 2002, Mirrlees – Black 1999, Radford and Hester 2006, Richards 2003, Saunders 2002, Walby and Allen 2004). With women more likely to experience violence over a longer period of time, there is a greater probability of post separation violence which may include stalking, threats and intimidation to a child, a family member or close friend (Budd and Mattinson 2000, Gadd et al 2002, Hamberger and Guse 2002, Johnson and Bunge 2001, Mirrlees – Black 1999, Saunders 2002). Dobash and Dobash (2004) found that reports of women engaging in serious violence were not the norm, and male and female reactions to interpersonal violence are different. For men there is a tendency to minimise or justify the violence, whereas for women the consequences, as detailed above, are somewhat damaging. Dobash and Dobash (2004) also looked at females who had abused their male partner and men who had abused their female partner. The findings showed men and women disagree about the occurrence of the violence and have different thresholds as to what they describe as violence (Gelles 1997). Mirrlees –Black (1999) found that victims' perceptions of their experience determined whether they contacted services. Furthermore, if victims felt they were in some way to blame for the incident they were more reluctant to report to the police. Also, male victims did not perceive the incident as a crime, whereas the survey found that, for women, only 17% of incidents were considered to be crimes by the victim.

Women are at risk throughout their daily routines – from harassment, intimidation and assault (Chaw and Rigakos 2002, Stanko 1990). However, what makes the impact of their suffering more difficult to explain, is that the perpetrator is a person who they

love and hate in equal measure (Hoff 1990). From the perpetrator's perspective, the focus of their love becomes an object valued as a commodity rather than a human being (Wolf-Light 1999). According to Nutt (1999), when exposed to violence, victims become self-devalued and convinced they are unworthy and therefore deserve to be abused. This self-devaluation will have consequences for the overall health and well being of the victim. The accumulation of various health problems can be further exacerbated by the victim becoming isolated from friends and family as part of the perpetrator's on-going strategy to gain control and exercise ultimate power over the victim. This can impact and lead to low self esteem (Hampton et al 1999), higher levels of self harm especially among young Asians (Humphries and Thiara 2003), and psychological issues which can be associated with distress, depression, anxiety, PTSD and ultimately suicide (Campbell 1998).

The effect of health problems can also mean the victim is unable to continue in employment, or to find employment, further increasing their isolation. Homelessness can also be a trigger for health problems with a study by the homeless charity Shelter finding that 40% of homeless women reported that domestic violence was a contributory factor (Cramer and Carter 2002).

Recorded crime statistics can also shed light on the nature and extent of domestic violence. However, it is readily acknowledged that police recorded crime figures should not be taken at face value and need careful interpretation, especially with regard domestic violence. In examining these figures, there are three key areas which need to be considered; changes in legislation and formal recording rules, policing recording behaviour and the reporting behaviour of the public (Flatley et al 2010, Goodey 2005, Maguire 2002, 2007). The police figures are also influenced by police discretion as to whether to record a crime, which can lead to the exclusion of certain crimes (Cook 1997). In many cases police judgement is guided by their professional acumen, Home Office guidelines, public tolerance, resources and media campaigning (Fattah 1997, Williams 1997). In terms of domestic violence, all three key areas are of importance. Domestic violence is under-reported and has been, in the past, down graded by the police. Activism by the women's movement over the past four decades has led to reform which now means the police and other criminal justice agencies take

domestic violence more seriously. However, the true extent still remains hidden (Richards, Letchford, and Stratton 2008).

The introduction of the Home Office Counting Rules 1998 had a significant impact on the recording of violent and sexual crime. In the year following their introduction there was a 118% increase in violence against the person offences recorded by the police (Home Office 2010, Povey and Prime 1999). The increase was as a result of the widening of the offence to include assaults with little or no physical injury and offences of harassment which resulted in no physical harm or injury. The introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard (2002) also resulted in an increase of recorded violent and sexual offences, particularly for less serious offences. The introduction of these standards saw an estimated 23% increase in violence against the person in the first twelve months after introduction (Simmons et al 2003). Overall in 2009/10 all police recorded crime decreased by 8% to 4.3 million crimes. The sanction detection rate – which means the offender has been given a formal sanction – in 2009/10 for violence against the person stood at 44% and at 30% for sexual offences. With the emergence of intelligence led policing, groups, individuals and areas are targeted and relevant resources supplied to counter the problem (Maguire and John 2006, National Criminal Intelligence Service 2000, Tilley 2008).

Prior to the National Crime Recording Standard, Croall (1998) expressed concern at the reliability of police figures because of the inconsistency of the recording practices in different forces. Moreover, the police focus time and resources primarily on working class crime, inner city and the more poor deprived areas, ignoring the crimes of the middle classes and white collar crime (Cook, 1997, Lawson and Heaton 2010). The reluctance of domestic violence victims in the past and in many cases the present, to report an incident, has an impact on the degree of understanding of the true nature and extent of domestic violence. Before 2002 if a domestic violence incident was recorded, the figures would only show one offence, regardless of repeat victimisation. However, repeat incidents since 2002 are now recorded. The victim's expectation of the response will also determine whether or not an incident is reported.

Over the past decade the importance placed on police performance and meeting crime reduction targets has also impacted on recorded crime. There were concerns that these figures did not paint a true picture as to the full extent of domestic violence and the true figure remained hidden (Dobash and Dobash 1992, Genn 1988, Matthews and Young 1986, Stanko 1988, Young 1988). These concerns were initially addressed in the mid 1980s with the introduction of local crime surveys by left leaning Local Authorities. These local surveys provided more detailed information about the extent of domestic violence, types of incidents and victims' experiences all within a local setting (Crawford et al 1990, Jones et al 1986, Mooney 1993). It was through these surveys and further academic literature that a clearer picture started to emerge as to the true extent of domestic violence.

A standardised approach to understanding victimisation was introduced in 1982 with the publication of the first BCS which produced information about individual's experience of crime in 1981. The survey involved 11,000 people, from a cross section of society in England and Wales, being interviewed and asked if they had been a victim of crime, or crimes, during the previous twelve months. The main offences covered in the survey were theft of/from a vehicle, vandalism of private property, burglary of dwelling, assault/wounding, robbery, theft from person and bicycle theft. The survey was to be published bi-annually and from 2001 it became an annual survey and started to cover the financial year rather than the calendar year (Maguire 2007).

The BCS is considered to be a method of uncovering the 'hidden figures' of crime, including domestic violence; but this fails to expose the full extent (Hope 2005, Walby and Allen 2004, 2001, Walby and Myhill 2001). The reasons for this are that victims of domestic violence may wish to conceal information for personal or family reasons (Ibid), the fear of reprisals (Lawson and Heaton 2010), an unsympathetic response from the police or fear their children may be taken from them (Nicholson et al 2003). Another reason as to why the BCS still underestimates women's victimisation is the BCS excludes refugees and those in temporary accommodation in the surveys (Mirrlees-Black 1999, Walby and Allen 2004, Walby and Myhill 2001). It is also difficult to determine what constitutes rural crime as there is no agreed

definition; thus making distinctions regarding levels of crime problematic (Aust and Simmons 2002).

The BCS is essentially a victimisation survey which also canvasses the public's attitude to the criminal justice system and their perception of anti-social behaviour (ASB). Since its introduction in 1982 there have been a small number of changes. These include how interviews with the public are carried out. Due to the introduction of new technology interviewers now use a lap top computer rather than the out moded pen and paper. Methodological changes have allowed non-respondents to be identified, which have gone some way towards improving the quality of the data collected. Additional samples of the population have been included, such as young people and the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population. The inclusion of these groups has produced statistics, reliable estimates and developed knowledge of issues faced by these groups. Moreover, the BCS has also had to introduce questions on new and emerging issues such as fraud and technological crimes. The survey is also used by the Home Office to assess whether their targets to reduce crime, the fear of crime, anti-social behaviour and public confidence in the criminal justice system are being met (Home Office 2010, Jansson 2007, Maguire 2007, 2002).

Whilst the BCS was generally welcomed there were still concerns about 'hidden crimes' such as domestic violence. One valid argument being that it would be highly unlikely that a victim of domestic violence would disclose this on the doorstep. This concern was partially addressed in the 1990s with the introduction of a self completion questionnaire in 1994. This self completion questionnaire was also included in 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2004/05 and 2005/06. The questionnaire explained the different aspects of interpersonal violence with the questions becoming more varied in order to address different areas of policy and interest (Home Office 2010, Jansson 2007).

Whilst the official statistics showed that women suffered abuse, the local surveys identified the type of physical abuse; whether that be kicking, punching, or slapping as well as identifying the emotional and physiological affects of abuse. The Islington Crime Survey was undertaken because the BCS, which at the time had only been

published in 1982 and 1984, could not provide detailed information about crime, the types of crime and victims' experiences; for specific areas or local communities. The survey itself was also influenced by realist criminology which explored interclass and inter-race crimes (Matthews and Young 1992).

The Islington Crime Survey (Jones, et al 1986) explored the impact crime had on women and how the policing of these crimes impacted upon them. It looked at the effects this may have on their perceptions of crime, their behaviour in relation to the perceived threat, their needs in relation to safety, and if their needs were being met; most notably by the criminal justices agencies. This more comprehensive analysis of risk and violence towards women delivered data which was not included in the BCS. The Survey found that there was a high proportion of women who suffered both physical and psychological injuries on a regular basis. It also revealed that they received 'very little institutional support' of which they felt was satisfactory, and which led to many women having to make their own provision for their protection. The abuse suffered by women was mainly sexual assault and domestic violence. The Survey also looked at the type of injuries women experiencing violence faced. Whilst any type of violence is serious for the victim, the Survey showed the type of injury women faced could range from being slapped, kicked or punched, to strangulation and cigarette burns. Criticism of the BCS from the authors of the Islington Crime Survey report was that the BCS 'assumes' that women who experience violence do so in that year of the BCS and then it is forgotten (Ibid), but many women's experience of violence can last a lifetime and not just the previous year (Stanko 1988). Moreover, the BCS also overlooks the frequency of the violence and therefore cannot provide an accurate figure on repeat victimisation, especially in relation to domestic violence (Jones et al 1986).

There was a second Islington Crime Survey undertaken in 1990 (Crawford et al 1990) which included some changes from the previous one, specifically the introduction of new topics such as the fear of crime. There was also a new section on sexual offences which included experiences of child abuse and incest. As with the previous Survey the findings showed that women were still facing a high proportion of sexual assaults and domestic violence; and that the relationship between fear and victimisation was

closely related to the victim's circumstances and environment. One of the recommendations from the Survey was that all women who were a victim of sexual assault or domestic violence should be given the opportunity of being interviewed by a woman police officer. Also, funding should be sourced and provided to women's refuges for more bed spaces, and the local women's refuges should lead a multi disciplinary team as the most effective way to deal with domestic violence (Ibid).

As with the BCS and police recorded crime figures, there was also criticism of local victimisation surveys such as the Islington Crime Survey. The main criticism came from feminists working in the area of domestic violence, most notably Mooney. Mooney's (1993) criticisms of the victimisation surveys were that they too had 'hidden figures,' most notably with regard to domestic violence. She felt that the victimisation surveys covered a wide range of crimes and did not have the 'sensitivity' to pick up all victims suffering from domestic violence. She argued that incidents of domestic violence are mostly not known outside the family, and therefore it is highly unlikely that a victim would choose to disclose to an interviewer asking a range of questions on crime. Moreover, non-reporting of domestic violence is considered high for a number of reasons, thus adding to the hidden figure. Research by feminists at that time had shown higher incidences of domestic violence than the victimisation and BCS surveys of that period (Hall 1985, Hanmer and Saunders 1984). This, suggests Mooney (1993), was because feminists were aware of the 'methodological inadequacies' of these surveys, especially regarding what actually constitutes domestic violence. To address the issue feminists employed more sensitive techniques such as a self completion questionnaire.

In order to test her criticisms of victimisation surveys Mooney (1993) conducted her own survey on domestic violence which became known as The North London Domestic Violence Survey. The findings from Mooney's survey showed the extent of violence and abuse suffered by female victims. The figures showed that physical violence resulting in actual bodily harm and mental cruelty was suffered by a vast majority of women. Mooney states that mental cruelty suffered by women from intimate partners has more impact in the longer term than physical violence.

The second section of Mooney's survey looked at the incidence, prevalence and time span of domestic violence incidents. Incidence refers to the number of incidents of violence, whilst prevalence concentrates on number of individuals affected. The results show that mental cruelty is more common than actual violence, and actual physical violence is more common than violence which results in injury. In supplementary questions the women surveyed revealed other forms of violence and abuse they had suffered, such as being bitten, burned with cigarettes, scalded, knocked unconscious and having experienced a miscarriage as a result of being assaulted by their intimate partner. This data also highlighted that it was not unusual for the violence to start during pregnancy.

Combining men's and women's experience of violence from their partners showed that women were three times more at risk of violence from an intimate partner than men. Moreover, women were more likely to suffer a wide range of violence which resulted in injury than men. Women were also more likely to have a weapon used against them. The survey showed that a weapon had not been used against any of the men questioned. Women suffered more incidents against them than men, and if women did use violence towards their partner it was more often than not used in self defence. A significant number of incidents occurred when women were not living or had never lived with their partner. The majority of those interviewed said that if they reported the violence it was mainly to friends and family. In terms of agency response to reports of domestic violence, the experience of women was mixed. Some said the response had been 'wonderful' and 'very supportive,' whilst others had been blamed for the violence and others were put under pressure to stay in the relationship. The two main agencies women were most likely to contact were their GP or the police. Furthermore, due to the confidential nature of the GP consultation, it was very unlikely that a disclosure of domestic violence went any further than the surgery. There were others who had reported to their solicitor. However, Mooney warned of the implications in the then proposed cuts in the legal aid budget and cautioned that this could have a detrimental effect on victims receiving a positive outcome in any legal proceedings. Only a small minority of women victims – 5% - had contacted their local refuge. However, those who had, reported that it had been a positive experience.

The local surveys did provide a more detailed account of victim's experiences and the types of abuse they faced. While the surveys could be criticised for not been representative, they did start to record victims' views of police and agency responses to their abuse. This not only assisted in identifying victim's needs, but also informed campaigners, agencies and policy makers about the shortcoming in the responses to domestic violence.

Researching Domestic Violence in Rural Northumberland

Although the BCS, Local Crime Surveys and the work of many academics has shed light on the nature, extent and response to domestic violence, it is still urban centred. There needs to be a much more focused understanding of rural areas and the nature and impact of domestic violence and of the criminal justice response in those areas. This thesis aims to explore the response to domestic violence in a rural area and to gain an understanding of how rurality influenced the experiences of victims and responses by agencies. As the thesis evolved an examination of the strategic and community safety response was undertaken as this coincided with Northumberland County Council undertaking a partnership approach to tackling domestic violence.

The research carried out for this thesis has been informed by a triangulation of methods involving interviews, an analysis of published and unpublished documents and a literature review. The review of the academic and scholarly literature assisted in the formulation of specific research questions associated to the area of study. The review also indicated how much research had been undertaken on the topic, identified gaps within existing research and highlighted pitfalls of previous studies. Moreover, the development of a theoretical and analytical framework was enhanced by a thorough review of the literature.

A qualitative approach was taken to the research and included collating relevant documents such as minutes of meetings and strategic documents, and undertaking interviews with stakeholders. Interviews were semi-structured and carried out with agency and organisational representatives, as well as with victims of domestic violence. Consideration needed to be taken as to the time scale of the research and

personal time management, especially in relation to studying whilst in full time employment.

With the topic of study chosen, I reflected on possible interviewees; how they would be contacted and what the contingency plan would be if people were unavailable or refused to be interviewed. Consideration was also given to the need to access all relevant literature, including libraries, journals, periodicals, newspapers and inter-library loans. To address these issues methodologically I produced a timetable with a timescale for completion of all tasks. During this period I also had numerous discussions with my tutor regarding the nature of the research; acknowledging the ethical issues around being a male researching domestic violence, timetables and access to literature and interviewees. During all discussions I was offered advice and support which helped sustain my belief that the research would be completed to the required standard within a realistic timescale.

Rural Northumberland as a Research Site

The landscape of rural Northumberland is a classic example of how rurality is contested and is an illustration of what Marsden et al (1990) see as the boundaries becoming ‘increasingly blurred.’ The contrast between the more rural areas of the North and West and the more urbanised areas of the South East expose the difficulties of defining rural. The County of Northumberland has a total population of 307,190 at the 2001 census, and covers just less than 2000 square miles. Approximately 50% of the population live in just 5% of the area situated in the South East of the county. The vast majority of the North and West of the county is predominantly rural and relatively sparsely populated. At the time of the research the political structure of the county was divided up into six District Councils and one County Council. The District Councils were located in the North, South East and West with the County Council centrally located in the South East. Within Northumberland, at the start of the research each District Council had a Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). These were serviced by six Community Safety Officers, all ex-policemen from Northumbria Police, who worked in each of the six districts but were employed by Northumberland County Council. During the research the two Northern

partnerships, Berwick and Alnwick, merged to become one. Each partnership was chaired by a representative from the corresponding District Authority. In addition to the CDRPs there were three Domestic Violence Forums sited within Council areas. These were situated in the North (Berwick and Alnwick), in the West (Tynedale) and the third in the South East (Wansbeck, Blyth Valley and Castle Morpeth). The membership of the Forums consisted of both statutory and voluntary sector representation. From the late 1990s the police had chaired the Forums, however during the research Local Authority representatives chaired two Forums and a former victim of domestic violence chaired the Forum in the North. However, during the period of the research the police continued to play an important role within all three Forums. The Forums met approximately once every four to eight weeks. Nevertheless, there was a period, in late 2001 until early 2002, when none of the three Forums were meeting on a regular basis. There was also no joint set of aims and objectives, with the meetings tending towards an ad hoc agenda.

To gain an understanding of how the strategic response to domestic violence has developed in rural Northumberland, the starting point is 1999. At this particular time the Domestic Violence Forum in the West of the County commissioned Northumbria University to undertake research into the current situation of domestic violence in the County and also to recommend on the best way forward in developing a strategy.

The research commenced in January 2000, and involved all three Domestic Violence Forums and the hosting of two workshops. The findings from this research showed that there was no clear or common strategy in existence and the subsequent Report put forward a number of recommendations as to how this could be rectified. In November 2000 a conference was held to present the findings and explore ways of taking the recommendations forward. The conference was attended by a range of agency representatives from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

During the following eighteen months the three Domestic Violence Forums within Northumberland explored ways to take forward the recommendations from the research. However, there was still a disjointed approach, with the three Forums tending to work independently of each other with no standardised terms of reference

or a clear strategic vision. In July 2002 Women's Aid hosted a conference entitled the Northumberland Domestic Violence Development Project Conference. The main theme of the day was discussing the strategic approach for the Forums, partnership working, the frequency of Forum meetings and the types of agencies to be represented. The agenda of this conference gave the impression that little had been achieved since late 2000 and that stakeholders were still searching for a cohesive and partnership approach to domestic violence.

The following twelve months saw many changes but not necessarily in the way many involved had anticipated or expected. During this period Women's Aid ceased to operate in Northumberland due to internal disputes. One former employee then, with police assistance and support, set up the Northumberland Domestic Violence Project (NDVP). The Project had the support of the Forums and the CDRPs, who provided finance so the initiative could become a reality. Initially the Project was housed in a centrally located police station where certain officers were instrumental in driving the Project forward.

During this period the Forums continued to meet, albeit somewhat sporadically. Nevertheless, the one in the West continued to be pro-active and, for example, had set up a sub-group to look at the issue of alcohol and domestic violence. However, due to the demise of Women's Aid, funding had been withdrawn from the satellite Women's Aid Project in the West and subsequently been given to a newly formed organisation named 608030, with aims similar to those of Women's Aid. Moreover, at this particular time the meetings of the West Forum started to be irregular.

A Conference to launch the NDVP was held at a central location in July 2003. As with the previous conferences, attendance was high and representatives were drawn from both the statutory and voluntary sectors. The focus of the conference explored multi-agency solutions to the problem of domestic violence, with the police being particularly influential. The NDVP was envisaged as a strategic body which would steer, direct and manage the response from the forums and other relevant organisations. Expectations of the Project were high and recognised by Government Office for the North East (GONE), which provided funding for the operational costs.

Whilst there had been some false dawns in trying to formulate a pro-active strategic response to domestic violence, the feeling at the launch was that the NDVP was a new beginning and the influential police personnel taking a leading role underpinned these expectations. However, the bringing together of partners and facilitating a multi-agency response to domestic violence failed to materialise. Mistrust of the Project, which had started to fester due to the breakdown in relationships between partners, was a fundamental factor in its ultimate failure.

If there was to be an example of how far countywide partnership working had deteriorated since 2000, the bids for Northern Rock funding in 2004 was a defining moment. As they had done over a number of years, the Northern Rock Foundation allocated a certain amount of money to domestic violence. In 2004 one of the tenders for funding was to provide services for victims of domestic violence residing in rural areas. A representative of Northern Rock attended a number of seminars across the region, explaining what criteria and type of provision would comprise a successful consortium bid. It was also stressed that in two-tier authorities there needed to be strong evidence of partnership working between the rural districts. Within Northumberland the only two districts who would fit the rural criteria were the North and the West.

Given the indication by the Northern Rock of strong partnership working between rural districts, their expectation was for a joint funding bid. However, a decision was taken by the North and the West to submit two separate bids. The North held an event entitled Inform the Bid in which attendees were encouraged to help formulate the bid. In the West the Forum held a one day Conference entitled Domestic Violence – Everyone's Concern. This had been arranged in the advance of the Northern Rock funding tender and mainly concentrated on what type of provision could be implemented in the West. After much discussion the two bids were submitted. The one in the North had limited County involvement, whilst the West did have a contribution from the County. The main responsibility for writing the bid in the West fell to the District Council's Housing Department and in the North to the Community Safety Officers.

Neither District was successful in their bids, but it must be stressed that there were partners involved in both bids that were perplexed with two bids being submitted, rather than a more cohesive joint bid. Representation from the NDVP was included in the West bid but not the North. The factionalism caused by the separate bids and a continued lack of faith in the NDVP showed that by the end of 2004 a strategic partnership response to domestic violence across Northumberland was no nearer than it had been when Northumbria University undertook their research four years earlier.

In April 2005 another conference took place entitled Action against Domestic Violence, with four main discussion themes of housing, support services, information sharing and strategy. This conference was also exploring the implications of Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 225. The attendees were mainly drawn from the South East of the County. Around the same time the County Council put together a strategic group. This was a small group made up of County Council employees drawn from Children's Services, Education and the Crime Reduction Division. After a few meetings a short report was compiled to reflect the priorities concerning domestic violence which also incorporated the Mapping the Journey Report (2004). After a few months meetings became sporadic. However, members from the Crime Reduction Division were instrumental in locating funding for an outside organisation to put together a three year domestic violence strategy for Northumberland, which would include strategic objectives and be monitored to measure progress. A small number of organisations were invited to tender for this piece of work. The tender was examined by the Crime Reduction Division and the contract awarded to a Sheffield based consultancy who were not included on the original expressions of interest e-mail.

This firm worked with a number of stakeholders, producing a draft strategy which included an Action Plan and was circulated for consultation in July 2006. The strategy was to cover the period 2005-2008. To oversee the delivery of the strategy an Executive Committee and an Action Plan Group were formed, together with time limited sub-groups, to work on more specific areas of the strategy. A launch event was held in October 2006 which gave details of the Action Plan and up-dates on any progress made. In May 2007 a Paper was circulated by the Community Safety

Directorate to stakeholders stating a further review of the strategy would take place and there were proposals for a new structure for the Executive and Action Plan Groups. These proposals were implemented unopposed. A further strategic plan was circulated for review in June 2007, which, by the spring of 2008, was still under review.

List of Key Conferences/Launches	
January 2000	Northumbria University Research Commences
November 2000	Conference to present findings and discuss the way forward
July 2002	Women's Aid Conference, Northumberland Domestic Violence Development Project
July 2003	Conference to launch the Northumberland Domestic Violence Project
October 2004	Northern Rock Bids
April 2005	Action against Domestic Violence Conference
October 2006	Launch of Countywide Strategy
May 2007	Proposals for a new strategy
June 2007	New proposals circulated for review

Box 1.0 List of Key Conferences/Launches

Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis is as follows:- Chapter 2 focuses upon victimisation and the emergence of the victim, especially in relation to domestic violence. This will also include the development of services for victims and more contemporary developments. How rurality impacts on victims will also be explored, looking specifically at rurality and crime and the geography of domestic violence. The provision of services in rural areas, the culture and nature of rural communities will also be examined. Classifications of different types of rurality will be set out as a way of defining the differing geographical aspects of rural. This will also assist in describing the geographical landscape of Northumberland. A review of the literature related to the key findings of the research will also be undertaken.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the criminal justice response to domestic violence and the emergence of governance and the partnership response to domestic violence. The review of the academic and scholarly literature associated with the criminal justice response will highlight how the issue of domestic violence moved from being considered as ‘just a domestic’ to a partnership approach which encompassed a wide variety of agencies. This will include an exploration of Domestic Violence Forums, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and a move towards a risk management approach.

Chapter 4 sets out the methods and methodology undertaken for this thesis. This will include detailing the aims and objectives of the thesis and the theoretical perspectives which informed the process. A detailed overview of Northumberland follows which allows the thesis to be contextualised. The following sections detail the methods used including semi-structured interviews and reflection on the interviews with victims and stakeholders. Data processing and analysis and ethical issues will also be discussed.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 relate to the findings from the research. Chapter 5 examines the perceptions and experiences of domestic violence in rural Northumberland. This will highlight issues such as distance and time, victims’ access to services and the reporting of incidents. Specific issues to rural areas such as solidarity, attitudes and culture will also be highlighted.

Chapter 6 explores the rural politics and the governance of domestic violence. This includes an exploration of the impact a two tier Local Authority arrangement has on the response to domestic violence, which incorporates Domestic Violence Forums and multi agency working. The second part of the chapter concentrates on the strategic approach to address domestic violence in rural Northumberland, which raises issues of transparency and accountability.

Chapter 7 looks at the criminal justice and social justice response to domestic violence. This looks specifically at how the criminal justice agencies have responded to domestic violence in rural Northumberland. This includes an examination of the police and the sentencing policies of the local magistrates. There is also an

examination of service provision specifically focusing on accommodation and the issues regarding housing and refuge provision.

Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter and begins with a reflective look back at the development of the thesis. The four main themes – police response, partnership working, distance and time and cultural difference - which have emerged from the research are then addressed and the section concludes with a discussion on the issues which arise. The final section discusses the future implications of the findings of the research.

CHAPTER 2

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, VICTIMISATION, RURALITY AND VICTIMS OF CRIME

Introduction

This chapter explores the emergence of the victim in policy and academic discourse and goes on to examine the impact this development has had, particularly in terms of domestic violence. This exploration of the victim seeks to develop an understanding of how rurality impacts on women's experiences of domestic violence in relation to service provision. Moreover, it aims to look at issues specific to rural areas such as 'community' 'transport networks' and the structure of service provision and the effect on victims. This in-depth analysis will assist in developing an understanding of how rurality impacts on victims' experiences of domestic violence within a rural setting.

The chapter comprises of three sections. The first section examines academic and policy interest in the victim, looking closely at the development of services for victims both historically and contemporarily and acknowledging relevant legislative changes. The second section sets crime and victimisation in a rural context looking specifically at rurality; a framework of classifications of rural; crime and domestic violence; the geography of domestic violence; the provision of services in rural areas and concluding the section by examining communities and culture. The final section highlights key findings from the research literature which brings together themes and issues which will complement those already discussed.

Academic and Policy Interest in the Victim

At the beginning of the 1960s victims of crime had no voice and were not acknowledged as victims within government policy or practice (Kearon and Godfrey 2008). Initial concern for victims of crime had started to emerge during the early 1950s when social reformer Margery Fry undertook a personal campaign which highlighted what it was like to be a victim of crime. She demanded that victims of

crime should be compensated in some capacity; and in 1964 managed to persuade the government to set up the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (Davies 2007, Davies et al 2005, Marsh et al 2004). From an academic viewpoint the work of Von Hentig (1948), Wolfgang (1958) and Mendelsohn (1963) started to address the issues faced by victims. Von Hentig and Mendelsohn especially, tried to identify how the victim and perpetrator were linked to each other as a way of developing an understanding of victims' needs. To this end they developed a 'victim typology' to assist in understanding these needs, which pinpointed those most likely to be victim prone, specifically women, children, the elderly and BME communities (Walklate 2003).

Von Hentig's work was linked closely with victims of crime, whilst Mendelsohn tended to focus on human rights (Marsh, Cochrane and Melville 2004). Walklate (2003) suggests that this work became the foundation on which the focus on victims' lifestyles was taken up and developed by Hindelang et al (1978). This academic study showed that in the 1960s the focus on victims related to the risks they faced, with the focal point being on social groups more prone to victimisation which was based on class, race and gender (Kearon and Godfrey 2008). Critics of this approach argued that it tended to ignore private violence such as domestic violence (Walklate 1992). Also during the 1960s the emergence of victimology attracted criticism for being seen to advocate the victimisation of the white middle classes and the privileged. These criticisms also centred on the invisibility of domestic violence (Hoyle 2008). Moreover, female victims of crime were, more often than not, seen as 'passive, submissive and resigned to being a victim' (Walklate 2000, see also Hanmer and Saunders 1984).

During the late 1960s the emergence of second wave feminism started to raise issues of domestic and sexual violence and the need for provision to meet victims' needs (Rock 2008). To address these needs it was generally agreed the voluntary sector were in the best position to deliver provision (Mawby 2008). However, it was the radical feminists who focused on private violence especially, and the familiarity of the victim and perpetrator to each other (Walklate 2007). Their approach also challenged male power over women and explored issues of masculinity and sexuality (Davies

2007). Similarly, radical victimologists took a holistic approach to victims which led to issues such as rape and domestic violence entering into the public arena (Marsh, Cochrane and Melville 2004). Moreover, they advocated a move away from the use of criminal statistics and a call for the use of improved quantitative data. This included the introduction of local crime surveys in the early 1980s which aimed to reduce the dependence on official statistics. Critics of this approach, most notably Newburn and Stanko (1994), commented among other things, on the failure to acknowledge the overlap between victims and offenders (Kearon and Godfrey 2008).

The politics of the radical feminists and victimologists saw challenges during the 1970s and 1980s to the 'liberal view' of the victim. These explored domestic violence, crimes of the powerful and their victims, and the victimisation of BME communities. Through these challenges the debate shifted from a 'liberal' assumption that a victim of crime was more often than not likely to be young, working class and male (Kearon and Godfrey 2008, Radford and Hester 2006). Radical feminists also considered the family unit to be an 'institution of repression,' which Millett (1970) theorised and recognised as patriarchy. This established that victims of domestic violence were more often than not female, and the perpetrators male (Hoyle 2008). The issues of patriarchy and social class were, for socialist feminists, fundamental in the understanding of justice and victimisation (Walklate 2002, 2004). Nevertheless, statistics generally show that the victimisation of men is higher than that of women, except for rape and domestic violence; and women are more fearful of crime than men, despite lower expectations of victimisation. Women's fear revolves around men, sexual and domestic violence and harassment either in the home or workplace (Davies 2007, Marsh et al 2004, Pain 2001, Stanko 1985, Upson 2004, Walklate 2001).

During the 1970s the victim had become more recognised and visible. This visibility was further augmented by the first major victims survey carried out in London by Sparks et al (1977) which analysed 'the extent and nature of unreported crime.' The survey also included questions on victims' perceptions of crime and how they felt the criminal justice system dealt with crime and victims (Zedner 1997). The main findings showed that a minority of participants 'were experiencing a disproportionate

amount of crime,’ and it would be possible to start to identify minority groups who may suffer repeat victimisation (Cited in Newburn 2007). A six fold typology was developed by Sparks (1982) to show how prone people were to becoming a victim of crime. Two of the six, vulnerability and impunity, could be used to define victims of domestic violence. Vulnerability examined the physical attributes which increase risk; whilst impunity looked at how an individual may be perceived as a relatively easy target, together with the likelihood they would not complain or seek retribution. Critics (Walklate 1989) of this view argued that it paid little attention to the ‘structural circumstances’ in which individuals found themselves and concentrated more on individual events and choices, suggesting a more radical victimology. A follow-up study by Genn (1988), one of Sparks’ co-authors, found the extent of multiple victimisation in certain families and questioned whether victim surveys were the best way of highlighting multiple victimisation of crimes such as domestic violence.

Development of Services for Victims

The first women’s refuge opened in the United Kingdom in 1972 and ultimately led to the formation of Women’s Aid in 1974. The refuge offered a safe place for women who were victims of violent partners. Women’s Aid had grown out of the women’s movement and the desire to address violence against women in their home, along with forms of sexual violence. In the early 1970s there was very little provision for women wishing to find alternatives from living with their violent partners. Protection by the law, either civil or family, was almost non-existent except in cases of divorce. Moreover, domestic violence was still not universally recognised as a criminal offence and still seen as a ‘behind closed door’ issue. Subsequently, the first Women’s Aid refuges were set up in response to the desperate need of women fleeing their violent partners. They were run by a mixture of committed women, activists and survivors. However, many of the properties were not in the best of condition and often overcrowded (Dobash and Dobash 1992).

Alongside the establishment of Women’s Aid, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) set up the first Victim Support project in the Bristol area (Goodey 2005, Marsh et al 2004, Rock 1990). Subsequently, they undertook an assessment of victims’ needs. The results showed that victims suffered

‘significant emotional, practical and financial problems’ and no statutory agency was taking responsibility for victims’ needs (www.victimsupport.com/about/history.html). In the early years Victim Support mainly worked with victims of ‘conventional’ crime such as burglary, robbery and theft. It was much later that they started to work with victims who had suffered from domestic and sexual abuse (Davies, Croall and Tyrer 2005, Goodey: 2005, Zedner 1997).

The growing concern for victims’ rights and needs led to a rise in victims’ movements other than those established ones such as Women’s Aid and Victim Support. Goodey (2005) identifies three main reasons as to the increase in victim movements. These were; the rise in crime, the emergence of a right wing tougher approach to the issue of crime and disorder, and the growth in the feminist movement especially around issues of child abuse and domestic violence.

During the 1980s Victim Support set up a committee looking into victims’ experiences of the courts based on findings from research by Shapland, Willmore and Duff (1985). The outcome of the Committee’s Report (Ralphs 1988) was the introduction of support services for witnesses who have to attend court. This service became available in all crown courts by mid-1990 and in all magistrates courts by 2002 (Mawby 2008). In 1995 Victim Support published a paper entitled *The Rights of the Victims of Crime* (Victim Support 1995) under which they identified five main headings. These were; compensation, protection, services, information and responsibility (Davies, Croall and Tyrer 2005). This led to a further government Victim’s Charter in 1996 which reflected some of the areas identified by Victim Support. In 1998 Victim Support also launched a victim support line (Davies 2007), and in 1999 they received £12 million in government funding. This was to fund 400 Victim Support groups across the country, and also enabled them to employ full time co-ordinators for each of the 400 groups (Marsh, Cochrane and Melville 2004).

Support services for victims, and especially the more specialised ones, were a welcome development. However, there was concern regarding victims’ expectations of services and whether these services were meeting victims’ needs. Further concerns revolved around victims’ knowledge of the existence of services and more

importantly what the service provided (Maguire and Corbett 1987, Shapland 1985). Research by the Oxford Centre for Criminological Research undertook studies into the victim's experience of being a victim (Maguire 1982, Shapland 1985). These studies found that overall victims were not happy with the response they received from the police and this unhappiness grew as the case progressed. The only time victims felt they were kept informed was if they were going to be called as a witness. Moreover, it was found that if victims were unhappy with the process there was less likelihood they would co-operate fully with the investigation (Ibid). Indeed, women attending court are more likely to suffer secondary victimisation, often being blamed for the abuse they have suffered, rather than the perpetrator being seen as the protagonist (Davies 2007). Shapland (1986) undertook a longitudinal study of victims of crime in England over a three year period. She found that 'suffering an effect does not necessarily imply the existence of a need' for support and it is not possible to know the actual needs of victims (Shapland 1986, 219). Shapland (1986) recommended that victims should receive immediate reimbursement for expenses or loss of earnings. She also advocated the need to have a system of 'practical help and emotional support' incorporating delivery of service and relevant information, as well as increased compensation for victims, to be provided by the courts. However, providing services for the victims of domestic violence is difficult; predominantly due to the lack of information regarding the needs of the individual and the lack of specialist services. This is more pronounced in rural areas.

Also during the 1980s significant legislation was introduced which assisted victims of domestic violence. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) was introduced in 1984 and under Section 17 (1) (b) of the Act a police constable was able to enter any premises 'for the purpose of arresting a person for an arrestable offence.' This would include assaults, grievous bodily harm (GBH) or wounding. Under Section 17 (1) (e) the police could also enter the premises if they felt by doing so they could save a life, or prevent 'serious damage to property' (Edwards 2001). The Housing Act 1985 made it a statutory duty for Local Authorities to re-house victims of domestic violence, and they became a priority need if children were involved (Morley 2000). The Criminal Justice Act 1988 made common assault and battery a summary offence and increased the maximum penalty to six months imprisonment. It also clarified the

need for witnesses to attend court. If a female victim of domestic violence refused to attend court, it may still have been possible for the case to proceed on the basis of the statement she had already provided to the police (Edwards 2001).

Contemporary Developments

The election of a Labour government in 1997 was the start of a period which resulted in the issue of domestic violence being addressed with a range of guidelines, strategies and legislation. Developments have included the Criminal and Court Services Act 2000. The Act made it a duty for the Probation Service to inform victims of serious sexual and violent crimes when the perpetrator, who had received a minimum 12 month sentence, would be released. The release date only being communicated to the victim if she wanted to know (Goodey 2005).

Further developments included The Criminal Justice Act 2003 which allowed for evidence to be given by television link (Davies et al 2005). The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 introduced, among other things, a Code of Practice and a Commissioner for Victims. By 2006 the Code of Practice was enforced. In the same year the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses and Victims' Advisory Panel was established (Davies 2007, 260/261).

The Code of Practice established that victims would be notified as soon as possible when someone was arrested, bailed or charged in relation to their case. The victim would receive accurate information at all stages of the case and the victim's needs would be identified at the earliest stage so that the information could be acted upon and passed to relevant agencies (Home Office 2006a). The Commissioner's remit included improved support for victims, working with local and national victims groups and relaying concerns back to Government, together with reviewing the Code of Practice.

The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 included further key provisions, such as new police powers which made it an arrestable and criminal offence to breach a non-molestation order. A breach would be punishable with up to five years in

prison. This power was also extended to same sex couples, and to couples who had never lived together or been married. The Act allowed the courts to impose restraining orders when sentencing for any offence. There was also the establishment of systems to review domestic violence homicide incidents, linking with relevant agencies to prevent further deaths (Home Office 2004b). The Act provided the police with more powers to arrest perpetrators than they had ever had (Hoyle and Zedner 2007). However, there were concerns about certain aspects of the Act. These included the CPS being able to take forward prosecution against the wishes of the victim and the fact that breaches of occupation/exclusion orders would not be deemed a criminal offence (www.womensaid.org.uk). Furthermore, Hester et al (2008) undertook research entitled Early Evaluation of Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, which focused on three specific measures of the Act. These were making common assault an arrestable offence, making it an arrestable, criminal offence to breach a non-molestation order and extending the civil law on domestic violence. Among the findings relating to making it an arrestable criminal offence to breach a non- molestation order were;

- Professionals expressed concerns about the phased entry of the new measure with different time limits for different jurisdictions, which was causing confusion among legal professionals and the police
- Views differed among professionals as to the impact of the criminalisation of breach of a non-molestation order on applications and orders
 - Some expected little impact as it had always been possible to attach a power of arrest to an injunction anyway
 - Those engaged with the court process felt that there had been a reduction in applications for non-molestation orders and orders granted since July 2007 either due to both a reduction in the availability of legal aid and the criminalisation of breaches, or because victims were concerned about potential imprisonment that follows a breach
 - Most advocates indicated that victims/survivors welcomed the new measure
- Victims/survivors were generally supportive of heavier sanctions for breaches,

and were especially concerned with enforcement

- Following criminalisation of breach of a non-molestation order the number of applications and orders decreased when compared with the previous year. However, with such a short trend it is not possible to conclude whether this is linked to the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act or whether it represents a consolidation of previous trends.

Overall the authors felt the Act needed to be monitored over a longer period, which would require reliable data to be collected and collated nationally from the civil and criminal process (Hester et al 2008 ii).

Over the past fifty years the victim has moved from the periphery to the centre of the criminal justice system. Whilst change has been incremental the election of a Labour government in 1997 gave rise to victims, and especially of domestic violence, becoming the recipients of more progressive legislation. This was underpinned with the introduction of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 which has been seen as the most progressive piece of legislation to address the issue of domestic violence in the past forty years (Hoyle 2008). Although not all Labour's criminal justice initiatives are seen in such a favourable light, especially around issues such as civil liberties (Smith 2007) and race (Phillips and Bowling 2007), there is little doubt that victims of domestic violence have benefited from this progressive change. Other contributory factors to the victim becoming a central figure in the criminal justice system has included mass media coverage – especially of certain victims – the introduction of victim surveys and the growth in academic literature (Digman 2005). Whilst the progress is welcome there is still a long way to go before the needs and rights of victims of domestic violence are fully addressed.

Crime Victimisation and Rurality

Rurality

This section contextualises an understanding of the term 'rurality' and we shall see later in the chapter how the boundaries of what defines rural are becoming blurred.

However, before discussing these issues in more detail, the first part of this section will identify variations across rural localities which will demonstrate that no one rural area is the same and a classification of rural can be fraught with difficulties, particularly as the geographical spaces of the countryside are spaces of ever increasing change. This exploration is useful in that it demonstrates how the definition of rural is determined by the differing geographical panorama being described. For example, a rural market town has different and defining characteristics to that of an outlying farm which is isolated from mainstream provisions. Therefore, the classification of rural presented at the end of this section attempts to contextualise the different facets of rural and then relate them to rural Northumberland. Moreover, the section also shows how researchers have attempted to distinguish these differing facets and offer a greater understanding of the intricacies of rurality.

Individual perceptions of rural can be constructed through routine practices which can take the form of lifestyle choices and how individuals interact with other countryside dwellers. Moreover, rural can also be explained through oral histories by individuals drawing upon their lived through experiences of rural changes over a period of time and space (Woods 2006, 2011). These constructions of rural, for Halfacree (2006), show how rural space becomes ‘three intermeshed facets,’ which are rural localities, formal representations and everyday lives of the rural. However, there still exist tensions between the three as the perception of rurality ebbs and flows.

For Abram (2003, 31), drawing on Foucault’s (1976) notion of the gaze, suggests that by looking and understanding what we see, images become ‘socially organised, structured through our internal interpretation of the visual stimulus.’ In terms of rural the reality of what we see becomes our interpretation and ‘categorisation’ of rural which over time can alter and reflect changes to rural space we have witnessed. Much in the way oral histories reflect lived experiences.

Rurality can be constructed and structured by individual views which, in essence, attempt to ‘purify’ rural space. Moreover, a collective understanding of what rural is develops, which feeds perceptions of urban/rural differences. This perception of rural, with its focus on agricultural and idyllic notions of the countryside, ignores the

reality of rurality, such as poverty and heavy industry (Cloke 2003). Rural policies have been heavily influenced by perceptions of agricultural dominance which gives an impression that everyday rural life revolves around farming (Woods 2006). This construction of rural is also influenced by experience and expectations of rural which in turn can be influenced by age, race, class and gender.

The impact of the neo-liberal free market has not left the countryside untouched, but has brought about a change to the economic base of rural areas which is ignored by those who see rurality through the lens of purity and idyll. The free market economy has overseen the de-industrialisation, not just of urban, but also rural areas, which resulted in the closure of the deep coal mines industry which operated in rural areas (Cloke 2003). The demise of heavy industry has led to an increase in service sector employment (Woods 2006, 2011), a decline in agriculture, services and a shortage of social and affordable housing (Eastman and Bunch 2007). These changes will have impacted on rural areas in different ways which challenges the collective understanding of rural. In short, a shift has taken place which has resulted in the rural economy moving from a reliance on primary industries 'based on the exploitation of the natural environment' to more secondary and tertiary industries such as the service sector and tourism (Woods 2006, 62). These changes have also altered the division of labour throughout the countryside which has seen the role of women being enhanced by, especially, the changes in agriculture.

Aside from these changes, rural areas have also witnessed a shift in demographics with the movement of young people to more urbanised areas in search of employment and affordable housing, and an influx of the urban middle-classes (Satsangi et al 2010). The influx of the middle classes to the countryside, Murdoch et al (2003) suggest, have pre-industrial romantic notions of rural which are free from urban influences such as industrialisation. The increase in private housing has, in part, enticed the urban middle-class to relocate to the countryside and commute to their place of work. The effect of which is a shortage of suitable social and affordable housing in rural areas. The migration to and from the countryside has also influenced the economy of rural areas from one of productivism to one of consumerism (Satsangi et al 2010). There have also been changes to rural localities, with some expanding

due to the construction of new roads and more industrial buildings; contrasted with the closure of shops and facilities (Woods 2006). The provision of services are more often based on cost rather than need and these changes impact more on those who are immobile, poor and disadvantaged (Furuseth 2008) and can be experienced differently by men and women (Shepherd 1998).

Murdoch et al (2003, 5) advocate the countryside is now 'differentiated' which focuses on 'patterns of geographical diversity.' This 'geographical diversity' is common to all rural communities and is determined by both internal and external influences on particular rural areas/spaces. These ambiguities, in relation to the construction of rurality, shift the emphasis from an idyllic notion of the countryside to one which is more complex and poses more questions than answers in the pursuit of what constitutes rural.

Over the past forty years the distinction between rural and urban has become 'increasingly blurred' (Marsden et al 1990). This challenged the nature of rural sociology of the twentieth century with its common set of 'suppositions associated with the distinctiveness of rural life;' which was more often than not seen as unchanging, whilst urban life was seen as 'dynamic and expansionist' (Murdoch and Marsden 1994, viii). Robinson; (1995) suggests that rural has proved 'elusive' to define despite the stereotypical view 'based on images of rusticity and idyllic village life' which Cloke (2003, 1) suggests society has been 'brainwashed from birth' by idyllic values.

This traditional notion of rural idyll is its ability to survive (Bunce 2003, 1994), amongst a nostalgic mist of 'myths and images.' There is an urge to escape modernity and long for the images of the country house, town, and village while clinging to the old ways and rules (Bunce 2003, Short 1991). For others the mythical view of the countryside as peaceful and the urban dangerous still prevails (Little et al 2005, O'Connor and Gray 1989). Also the concept of a community in which everyone knew everyone else and residents never had to lock their doors at night still holds currency (Frank 2003). However, Cloke (2006) suggests that the term 'rural' is a cultural phenomenon which stretches from idyllic to oppressive, but the contested

difference means various interpretations can be applied to certain circumstances (Short 2006). Another perspective is taken by Bell (2006) who suggests that rural idyll is a product of 'bourgeois imaginary' which is centred around 'media idyll,' 'tourist idyll' and 'gastro idyll.'

Nevertheless, rural idyll and notions of community means different things to different people who are informed by location, setting, interests or behaviour (Cohen 1985, Dempsey 1992). Rural communities can also look inwards to protect paternalism, sexism and racism which maintain power structures and exclude anyone outside the mainstream (Mendes 2004, Wallis and Dollery 2002).

The whole concept of rural idyll is constantly referred to as a distraction from the division of power, privilege, and deprivation which is found in all rural communities (Pugh 2003, Schulman and Anderson 1999, Shantall 2004). These are communities in which patriarchy is embedded (Alston 1997, Campbell and Phillips 1997) and the masculine nature of the countryside, is based around the pub and sporting activities (Campbell and Phillips 1997) and where strangers are seen as a threat (Little et al 2005). Therefore, rurality is based on values and morals which are created and understood by residents of rural areas themselves (Little and Austin 1996).

In order to dispel, or challenge, this stereotype Robinson (1995) has developed what he calls a rural black box 'which is affected by change in certain variables.' He identifies four variables which are portrayed as separate but are in fact interrelated, these being politics, history, physical environment and culture. Inside the black box are three elements, planning, society and economy, which are influenced by the four variables on the outside of the box.

Furthermore, Phillips and Williams (1985) identify two different aspects of rurality which are 'extreme rural' and 'intermediate rural.' Over the years rural areas have been dominated by and associated with agriculture. However, the recent decline in agriculture has led to 'rural space' being redefined (Marsden, Lowe and Whitmore 1990). Mormont (1990) identifies three common properties which identify rural societies. These are; small communities whose social control is based around

personal relationships; communities with particular cultural characteristics which are rooted in their history and tradition; and local institutions or forms of economic cohesion, of varying degrees of strength (Ibid 30). In contrast to this view Murdoch and Marsden (1994) identify four ‘ideal types’ which they argue define the ‘English Countryside.’ These are the preserved countryside (see also Cloke and Thrift 1990), the contested countryside, the paternalistic countryside and the clientelist countryside.

There is now an acknowledgement that the concept of rural is ‘multi-faceted’ and to come to an agreed definition would be problematic (Hart et al 2005, Rawsthorne 2008). The continued march of globalisation means that the countryside is no longer static but much more dynamic than in the past. This is partly due to industrial changes and a more mobile population (Cloke 2003). But to generalise as to differences between urban and rural does not make good policy and one needs to explore in more depth the idiosyncratic elements of the community to derive a better understanding (Hodge and Monk 2004). As there is no agreed definition as to what constitutes rural the following section explores in more detail some of the notions of rural discussed above. This exploration creates different classifications of rural, which are then compared with Northumberland to give a better understanding as to the geographical nature of the County. These classifications will also identify different aspects of rural which go some way to explaining and highlighting the complexities of defining rural. The table below gives a brief synopsis of each classification which is followed by a more detailed account of each definition.

Author	Overview/Synopsis	Definition
Mormont 1990 Robinson 1995 Woods 2006, 2011	Reflects industrial development and moves away from tradition notions of the countryside.	Urban rural
Murdoch and Marsden 1994 Murdoch et al 2003	Boundaries of the countryside have become blurred, so therefore need a more contemporary	Differentiated rural

	definition which Murdoch and Marsden (1994) break down into 4 categories.	
Phillips and Williams 1985	Extreme rural reflects remoteness and isolation whilst intermediate represents a more urban type countryside.	Extreme and intermediate rural
Bell 2006 Frank 2003	Bell (2006) explores the media interpretations of the idealist countryside. Whilst others such as Frank (2003) explore the notion of everyone knowing each other and not having to lock your doors.	Rural idyll
Defra 2005	Rural defined in terms of population.	Official rural

Box 2.0 Classifications of Rural

Classifications of Rural

Urban Rural

The classification of urban rural best describes the work of Mormont (1990) and Robinson (1995) mainly because they attempt to move away from traditional notions of rural to a more contemporary definition which reflects the changing nature of the countryside. Mormont (1990) suggested that the definition of rural has moved on from times when definitions were based on tradition and culture and how rural was defined by its 'remoteness.' Mormont (1990) also argued that rural needed to reflect the social changes which had taken place mainly in the latter part of the 20th century. An interpretation of rural needed to reflect industrial development and how this impacted on the countryside both from a social and cultural context. Moreover, he

also highlighted the growing distance between work and home which in many instances has been caused by the movement of production to more urbanised areas. This, for Mormont (1990), meant that differentials between urban and rural, once so common, cannot be sustained because of constant industrial and technological developments. This also has implications on how space is used to accommodate these changes. Therefore, Mormont's (1990) view of the countryside, to a certain extent, links with Woods (2006, 2011) who relates the definition of rural to individuals lived experiences which reflect the changes that Mormont (1990) articulates.

Robinson (1995), similarly to Mormont (1990), also attempted to move the notion of rurality from idyllic village life. This included a shift from the idealist notions of the romantic Right of the country house, church and tradition and the romantic Left ideal of rural folk societies, strong village communities and village crafts. In order to achieve this Robinson (1995) constructed a black box containing internal and external variables. In the box are three interrelated elements, planning, economy and society. However, the four variables outside the box; politics, history, physical environment and culture are seen as key to the impact and affect on the three variables 'nesting' within the box. This argues Robinson (1995) is a much easier way to understand the complex nature of rurality and the interaction between the variables. This he suggests in a simpler way to the 'numerous inter connections' which would emerge with the vast amount of variables if comparing the relationship between rural and urban. An example of how the variables interact with each other sees politics and the economy intertwined which ultimately impact on the functions of society. Planning can be interlinked with the changing physical environment, underpinned by planning and economic developments which ultimately impacts on the history of rurality and also cultural developments.

Robinson (1995), as with Mormont (1990), identifies other issues which assist in defining the changing nature of rurality. This has included how during the late 20th century there was incremental change which saw the separation of workplace and home residence. This mainly came about with the reduction in agricultural employment. This in turn led to 'metropolitan villages' which were mainly populated by the middle classes who had migrated from urban areas, but still worked in inner

city areas. These metropolitan villages were mainly surrounded by fields. This contrasts to the de-population of the countryside by those who needed to seek employment or move closer to services. This was partly fuelled by the closure in rural areas of post offices, schools etc. Therefore, urban rural represents an area which over time has developed to reflect economic development which results in a cultural shift in how rural areas are viewed. Moreover, the use of space for development has included housing development, industrial parks, new roads etc. These developments have contributed to the urbanization of rural space.

Differentiated Rural

Similar to other authors Murdoch and Marsden (1994) recognize how over the 20th century rural life has changed and which needs to be reflected in a more contemporary definition. Changes in rural life have, for Murdoch and Marsden (1994) meant that the boundaries between urban and rural have become 'blurred' and created an uncertainty as to what constitutes rural. To address this problem Murdoch and Marsden (1994) talk about a 'differentiated countryside' which for them is broken down into four different categories. These are the preserved countryside, the contested, paternalistic and clientelist, each of which are examined more closely.

The preserved countryside for Murdoch and Marsden (1994) is a retention of the status quo. This is a countryside which is adverse to change and where there is a strong sense of tradition. As well as being adverse to change the preserved countryside is also against development whether that is housing development or economic and industrial changes.

The contested countryside is an area which is separated from the location of commuter enclaves. However, for Murdoch and Marsden (1994) this part of the countryside is mainly dominated by farmers, many who are also landowners. Moreover, they are more likely to control the political structures in the area; for example the Parish Council. This allows them to agree to new developments which, more often than not, reflect their interests.

The paternalistic countryside is dominated by private estates which are occupied by families who have owned their land over many decades and who in turn, similar to the contested countryside, will take a proactive role in the development of the area.

Finally, the clientelist countryside is located in remote rural areas which are dominated by agriculture. Whilst agriculture is dominant in these areas the continuation and sustainability of it is reliant on subsidies from central government.

The differentiated countryside differs from the urban countryside as all four of Murdoch and Marsden's (1994) descriptions lean towards a more remote rurality which is influenced by the traditional notions of the countryside of mainly landowners and farmers. Whilst some economic development does take place their descriptions still have a feel of remoteness rather than an evolving more urbanized countryside as advocated by Mormont (1990) and Robinson (1995).

Extreme and Intermediate Rural

Phillips and Williams (1985) suggest that there are distinct elements which assist in determining what constitutes rural. These are isolation and inaccessibility. There is also, they argue, a demographic imbalance, and local councils and other bodies are conservative in nature and underpinned by a 'rural bias' which reflects a conservative approach. However, they do identify degrees of rural which are extreme and intermediate. Extreme rural reflects remoteness and isolation; whereas intermediate rural can in some ways mirror urban areas. In intermediate areas there is less reliance on agriculture for employment, there are more, similarly to urban areas densely populated and also house most of those employed in the surrounding areas. In contrast the more remote areas see the de-population of their communities, as service provision is reduced. The de-population of these areas means that there is a fall in demand for certain services which will only lead to increased inaccessibility and isolation for those remaining in their community. Extreme and intermediate rural identified by Phillips and Williams (1985) bridges the gap between urban and differentiated rural and identifies commonalities which distinguish the two from each other.

Rural Idyll

As previous sections have shown a number of authors have suggested that rural idyll is a mythical view of the countryside which is of a bygone era. There are still many who wish to still view the countryside through this mythical lens. They either fail to take account or choose to ignore the constant developments and changes which have been detailed above. However, the notion of rural idyll is mainly held by those who migrate to the countryside, and do so with what Bell (2006) has described as a 'bourgeois imaginary' of the countryside. This imaginary of the countryside is, for Bell (2006) based on how the media still portray the countryside as idyll, the promotion by the tourist industry of an idyllic rural countryside and the notion of enjoying culinary delights at a remote countryside pub. All of which feeds into the perception of rural idyll by those unable to let go of an idealist view of the past. Moreover, the media, tourist and gastro idyllic view is also more of a commercial exercise which plays on notions of the past in an effort to maximise revenue. Frank (2003) also highlights how there are those living in rural areas still hold to the notion that everyone knows each other and you do not have to lock your doors. Such ideals, highlighted by Bell (2006 and Frank (2003)), are more latter-day myths than twenty first century reality.

'Official' Rural

In 2004 Defra, along with the Commission for Rural Communities, the Office of National Statistics, the ODPM and the Welsh Assembly set out guidelines as to what represented rural. Rural is defined as a settlement which has a population of less than 10,000 people. The definition of rural is broken down into rural towns and fringe villages or hamlets, which are identified as such by using a detailed postcode data. Those identified as rural towns and fringe areas are generally seen as densely populated, whereas in contrast the village and hamlet areas are deemed to have lower population density as well as smaller settled areas.

However, in 2005 the Local Authority Rural Urban Classification was introduced (Defra 2005). This broke down the classification of rural into three separate categories which were as follows.

Significant rural – districts with more than 26% of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns

Rural 50 – districts with at least 50%, but less than 80% of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns

Rural 80 – districts with at least 80% of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns (Defra 2005)

Large market towns were identified as certain urban areas with a population of between 10,000 and 30,000. However, there were certain criteria including such factors as how they provided services for the wider rural hinterland. Therefore, there needed to be a minimum of three shops and the number of commercial businesses needed to reach a threshold of 3.5%.

These ‘official’ descriptions of rural are used in the main for policy making which allows legislators to differentiate between rural and urban. Moreover, it also assists Local Authorities in their implementation of policies such as housing and economic development. The more statistical definitions are more helpful in this process than some of the other notions of rural discussed above.

These different classifications allow a picture to be painted which exhibits how the geographical landscape of the countryside is made up of key components. These intersect between remoteness and isolation, hierarchal interests, a picturesque countryside, urbanised market towns and a definition based on population. Not all rural areas will consist of all these components. An exploration of rural Northumberland will show how these different strands of rural relate to the geographical landscape of the County.

Rurality and Northumberland

Parts of Northumberland which could be classed as urban rural are, in the main, situated in the South East of the County. In the past this part of the County was dominated by heavy industry, mainly deep coal mining. Nevertheless, even with the de-industrialisation the South East remains urbanised and has seen a growth in industrial estates looking to bring investment, various housing and town centre developments. Public transport, mainly buses, are frequent, towns are close to the A19 and A1 which allows comfortable access to Newcastle and surrounding suburbs.

The differentiated countryside represents the more outlying parts of the County, which are mainly situated in the North and West. These areas are still mainly reliant on agriculture and have notable landowners such as the Duke of Northumberland. However, there still has been some development similar to the South East but on a smaller scale. Places which would be classed as extreme rural are also situated in the North and West. Settlements such as Alwinton in the North and Humshaugh in the West have very poor public transport links, fortunate if they have a village store and are completely isolated in severe weather conditions as roads can be blocked for days as was the case in the winter of 2010/11.

The intermediate rural would reflect the market towns which are situated across the County. In the West there is Hexham, the North has Alnwick and Berwick; whilst Morpeth is situated centrally in the South East of the County. These towns have various commercial properties including banks, schools, garages and supermarkets.

The idyllic notion of the Northumberland countryside is focused on certain areas. The remote parts of the County situated in the North and West are most likely to be described as idyllic, whilst the market towns also reflect a certain notion of idyll. It is not often, if at all, if the more urbanized parts of the County situated in the South East were to be referred to as representing an idyllic rural setting.

As there is no agreed definition as to what constitutes 'rural', defining rural crime itself can be problematic. Nevertheless, it is essential to identify what rural crime is and to place it in the context of the thesis. The 2008/09 BCS states that people living in rural areas are less likely to be a victim of crime than those who live in an urban area. This has been the case over many years. However, like urban crime there has been a rise in rural crime over this period of time, particularly burglary (Aust and Simmons 2002). There are also differences in the types of crime being committed in urban and rural areas. Those crimes specific to rural areas include fly tipping, wildlife crime and farm related crime (Lawtey and Deane 2001). Others argue that differences between rural and urban crime is a myth which leads to an 'ideology of triviality' regarding rural crime, as in fact generally rural and urban crime patterns can be relatively similar (Gilling and Pierpoint 1999). This similarity is reflected in the Public Service Agreements (PSA) targets set for each CDRP, whether rural or urban. PSA targets were introduced by the Labour government in the 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review, to bring accountability and transparency to a range of public services including crime (Gay 2005). CDRPs were given challenging percentage targets to reduce different categories of crime. Targets issued by the government in 2001 included reducing vehicle crime by 30% by 2004 and a 25% decrease in burglary by 2005 (Crawford 2007). This, despite the differentials between urban and rural areas.

There also can be differences in how crime is perceived. A minor incident in an urban area may have a greater impact in a rural area, due to the low level of crime experienced by that community (County Council Network 2007, Young 1993). How crime, law and order are seen as priorities by MPs and residents of the countryside is reflected in a Report by the Commission for Rural Communities (2006) which found MP's rural priorities were farming, housing, public transport, education and farm diversification. Whereas, those rural residents questioned put the following as their priorities; public transport, law and order, farming, healthcare and young people.

However, those living in rural areas are more positive than their urban counterparts regarding levels of crime. Rural communities also have a greater satisfaction with police response to crime (Aust and Simmons 2002). Fear of crime within the countryside can be determined by police resources and can be increased by incomers from inner cities who move to the countryside and bring their fear of crime with them (Williams 1999). Little, Panelli and Kraack (2005) looked at women's fear of crime from a rural perspective and acknowledged that rurality can, and does, impact on fear of crime through police resources and the lack of relevant services. They found that the countryside was seen as safe, while the city was considered to be dangerous. 80.2% said they felt safer in a rural area than an urban; 3.9% felt unsafe in their home, 14.4% in the community and 13.8% in the open countryside; thus giving a sense of the home as a place of safety; whilst the outdoors was slightly more dangerous.

However, respondents were reluctant to disclose whether they had suffered from domestic violence. These findings test the common perception of the countryside being 'rural idyll' consisting of friendly, honest and genuine people.

The Geography of Domestic Violence

The examination of the geography of domestic violence includes an exploration of how rurality impacts on victims of domestic violence in terms of isolation, transport, police response times, service provision and community attitudes. It has been recognised that the number of incidents of domestic violence are similar in rural and urban areas (Van Hightower and Gorton 2002, Websdale 1998, Ulbrich and Stockdale 2002). However, more contemporary research has shown that rural women think domestic violence is more prevalent in urban areas (McCarry and Williamson 2009). In understanding why there are similar levels of domestic violence, a better insight into the urban/rural context needs to be gained, together with a particular focus on the 'unique factors' which divide the two (Brownridge 2009). Research suggests that those living in rural areas are more likely to be unemployed, face lower levels of income and also live within communities with lower educational qualifications (Hornosty and Doherty 2001, Logan et al 2004, Websdale 1995). In terms of domestic violence a combination of these factors can lead the victim to become

economically dependent upon the perpetrator, restricting scope to leave (Jiwani et al 1998) and can increase the probability that women will experience domestic violence (Navin et al: 1993).

Rural communities are often close knit, exacerbating the hidden nature of domestic violence, with victims being frowned upon if they decide to speak out about the abuse they are suffering (Garland and Chakraborti 2007, Rawsthorne 2008, Wendt 2009, Williams 1999). There are also problems of confidentiality; with isolated areas and members of small communities all knowing each other there is a reluctance to report an incident (Dingwall 1999, Wendt 2009). If victims do decide to report abuse to local services, they are still apprehensive about the confidential nature of the service (McCarry and Williamson 2009). The intimate setting of rural communities can mean a victim becomes isolated. This problem is further compounded by the lack of appropriate services and poor transport links. The deficiency of appropriate services includes specialists who deal with non-physical violence such as emotional and psychological abuse (McCarry and Williamson 2009). The distance of emergency services such as police and ambulance and the availability of refuge places further contribute to the victim's isolation (Bosch and Schumm 2004, Eastman and Bunch 2007, Gama 2000, Hayes 2007, Heist 2002, Logan et al 2001, Powe and Shaw 2004, Rawsthorne 2008, Van Hightower and Gorton 2001, Wendt 2009).

There may also be differences in the type of isolation the victim experiences due to geographical locations; specifically whether a victim is residing in a small town or an isolated farm house (Hornosty and Doherty: 2001, Murty et al 2003), in which no one will hear the victim's calls for help (Wendt 2009). The geographic nature of the isolation can be compounded further by the perpetrator isolating the victim from her family and friends (Jiwani et al 1998, Wilcox 2006, Ulbrich and Stockdale 2002), and in some cases coerce the victim to accept his friends (Wilcox 2006). Further research has suggested that victims who live nearer to their husband's family are more likely to suffer from domestic violence. This largely reflects his parents' judgement of the situation being based on the stereotypical myth that their daughter-in-law must be in someway to blame (Kurst-Swanger 2008).

Research has shown that rural victims are less likely than their urban counterparts to disclose abuse to family members and friends (Brownridge 2009, Shannon et al 2006). Conversely, other research has shown victims are more likely to disclose to family and friends before agencies (McCarry and Williamson 2009, Wilcox: 2006). Some victims who have disclosed abuse to members of their family have been told ‘you’ve made your bed, lie in it’ and are expected to cope with their situation (Hoff 1990). Further research has suggested that perpetrators actually choose to live in rural areas because it offers more opportunities to carry out the abuse and further isolate the victim (Murty et al 2003, Websdale 1998). This can be associated with the controlling nature of the perpetrator whose intention is to stop the victim accessing services (Radford and Hester 2006).

There is an added threat in rural areas, with a higher prevalence of shot guns than urban areas; and wide range of farming implements and machinery which can be used as tools of abuse (Harne and Radford 2008, Hornosty and Doherty 2007).

Eastman and Bunch’s (2007) US study into rural services for victims of domestic violence found that the demand for services far outweighs the availability of services. They identify certain factors which rural victims of domestic violence encounter in accessing services, even though research shows domestic violence rates in rural and urban areas are similar. These factors include geographical isolation, limited access to services, absence of employment opportunities, insufficient housing, lack of public transport and attitudes and tolerance to domestic violence (See also Gama 2000, Logan, Walker and Levkefeld 2001 Van Hightower and Gorton 2001).

An added problem for all victims of domestic violence is the negative reception they sometimes receive from agencies (Hoff 1990); in some instances they are viewed with suspicion (Wilcox 2006) and not believed (Hague and Mullender 2005). Furthermore Kurt-Swanger (2008) suggests agencies tend to focus specifically on victims’ issues without connecting them to the bigger picture. The participation of victims in service provision should be used as a mechanism for improving the response of agencies. Some of the improvements victims would like to see include positive action from all agencies; more resources for refuge and out reach work; more publicity and

information and more flexible housing options (Hague, Mullender and Aris 2003).

Hague (2005) found that many agencies were unable to accommodate victims in decision making and policy developments. Where victims were involved, they were frequently outnumbered, meaning their voice was not heard and they were often patronised by management. It was also felt that in some cases victims were being used just to meet agency targets. A further study by Hague and Mullender (2005) found that the response from agencies was top down, with little or no input from victims themselves. Services were difficult to access and there was an issue of distance and time between services. Moreover, it was felt that many agencies were under resourced, inadequate and unsafe. This will become more pronounced in rural areas as issues of familiarity, close knit communities and lack of service provision are more common. To understand the impact of domestic violence and the needs of victims necessitates the victims being allowed to tell their own story, which will allow local based solutions to emerge (Wendt 2009).

Access to services in rural areas has become more difficult in recent years, with the decline in general services (Garland and Chakraborti 2007). Powe and Shaw (2004) in their study of a market town which is situated in the area of this thesis, identify transport, access and proximity to local services as a major problem which is exacerbated by distance and time. Moreover, they stress that the small populations of many market towns and outlying areas makes the provision of services in these areas difficult to sustain. Hodge and Monk (2004) agree that small communities, or those decreasing in population, reduces the need for various services which in turn leads to a reduction in the size of the local economy. However, they warn against these 'rural attributes' defining policy interventions, because of the differing nature of rural areas and their links to urban conurbations. Hodge and Monk (2004) suggest that these differentials need to be taken into consideration when discussing and implementing policy. There needs to be importance attached to the provision of services in rural areas, especially those intended to support the vulnerable such as the elderly, unemployed and single parents (Higgs and White 1997). This problem is compounded when there is little or no access to public or private transport. If members of vulnerable groups live in the more isolated rural areas then the lack of

access leads to individuals being cut off, with isolation and marginalisation becoming more problematic (Cloke et al 1995).

This lack of support for victims of domestic violence may well mean that victims have to relocate to urban areas to access services, which results in their family and support networks being broken (County Council Network 2007). Organisations who provide services for victims of domestic violence such as Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Centres often find it easier to obtain funding for projects in an urban area, with rural areas having a skeleton service or no service at all (Henderson 1997, Williams 1999).

The police are usually the first agency victims of domestic violence will contact (Brownridge 2009). In rural areas there are lower levels of police and many police stations are not staffed full time (Lawtey and Deane 2001). Furthermore, there are fewer police officers in rural areas per head of population in comparison with urban areas. Financial cut backs have led to police stations closing, with response times increasing and limited availability of the resources needed to process an arrested offender (Gilling and Pierpoint 1999, Mawby 2006).

The police and policing culture in rural areas can be influenced by a number of factors including time, place, location, history, power, class, economies, gender and language. These influences are not challenged and are accepted as the norm in rural areas (Young 1993). This attitude fails to take into consideration the organic nature of the countryside, influenced by such factors as the rise in house prices (Cloke and Thrift 1990, Hoggart and Henderson 2005), change in population, decline in services and lack of decent recreational facilities (Garland and Chakraborti 2007).

Rural police practices and traditions are distinctive from the practices of urban based police. The police in rural areas may use more informal approaches than their urban counterparts. They are more inclined to mediate between victim and offender and negotiate an agreed solution between the parties. One factor could be because the nearest custody suite is outside the district, raising logistical issues of distance, time and the actual availability of a custody suite. Another aspect of rural policing is the

police tendency to be more integrated within their communities, thus giving a sense of familiarity and confidence to the public regarding local police practice (Mawby 2006, Williams 1999).

Research by Brownridge (2009) found that rural victims of domestic violence are more likely to report to the police, due to their isolation. However, there was a mixed response from victims as to the service they received with some having a positive experience and others a more negative one. This could be attributed to the individual officers and their response (Martz and Saravrer 2002). In another survey victims were asked what needed to happen to encourage them to report to the police. The main response was for the police to change their attitude and practice; instigate the appointment of more women and train and educate officers in domestic violence. It was also felt that officers should have contact details of relevant services which could be given to the victim at the time of the incident (Hanmer and Saunders 1993). The introduction of domestic violence units and specially trained domestic violence officers has been seen as a positive development by victims and has started to address some of the issues highlighted above (Hague and Mullender 2005). In rural areas there are core figures, usually determined by the cultural norms of the community, which are, more often than not, the police (Cooney 1990, Rawsthorne: 2008). However, as well as the police, there are other institutions which can have an influential role within rural communities, with the church (Hornosty 1995) and the G.P. being just two (Bagshaw et al 2000). These are by no means the same for every community but are three influential bodies.

The Provision of Services in Rural Areas

The rate of de-population of communities in rural areas has increased over recent years and is a factor in the limited or reduced service provision (Hodge and Monk 2004). As stated, rural communities can be very close knit which lead to a number of problems. For example, for those victims who do seek support there can be the added trauma of the risk of being ridiculed or the main topic of gossip within their community (Dempsey 2002, Williams 1999). This links closely with the issue of confidentiality (Wendt 2009, Williams 1999).

Women's Aid is the main service provider for victims of domestic violence countrywide. However, by their own admission, they find difficulties in providing services in rural areas (Henderson 1997, Williams 1999), thereby limiting victims' options. During the research Women's Aid ceased to operate in Northumberland after internal difficulties. Of those agencies that do provide services health workers have been found to be the most sympathetic and supportive (Cann et al 2001, McCarry and Williamson 2009). Hague (2000) found a major problem for victims was they were not believed; half of respondents felt services were ineffective, whilst the other half were more positive and felt there was a better understanding of victim's needs by the providers. Overall, victims felt that service providers needed to listen to victims and incorporate their identified needs into service delivery.

All service providers should have an understanding of the complexities of domestic violence to enable them to deliver an appropriate level of services which start to address the victim's needs (Morley and Mullender 1994). To assist agencies in delivery of services, the Home Office published Guidance for Multi-agency Working in 2003. The Guidance highlighted a number of key areas which services needed to address. These included developing policies and practices, making sure staff at all levels attend training and participation in Domestic Violence Forums. To ensure good practice, the primary task of agencies was to ensure the safety of victims. Services need to be accessible to all and information should be shared between agencies. Strategies and policies must be evaluated at regular intervals to ensure standards are maintained and if necessary practices changed.

The impact of geography and its influence on women and their role within society has to some extent been overlooked. Feminist debates on this issue have concentrated on issues such as domestic labour, part-time employment, the geographical nature of service provision and also how patriarchy and male power impacted upon feminist perspectives of geography (Little 2002). These studies have shown 'how women's lives were complicated by problems of mobility and access to service provision...' (Ibid: 27).

Rural Areas Communities and Culture

Today's modern state is based on patriarchal structures which are reflected in everyday life (Dobash and Dobash 1992). Violence perpetrated against women has been described by victims as either patriarchal, traditional or conservative (Biesenthal et al 2000). Economic abuse was the prevailing factor in their abuse which consisted of victims being denied access to their bank accounts and credit cards and in some cases being given an allowance (Ibid). Websdale (1995, 1998) has argued that there is a specific 'rural patriarchy' which is focused on the private rather than the public nature of patriarchy, and explores the exploitive nature of women's domestic labour and reproductive capacity.

The distinct nature of 'rural patriarchy' has many different facets which are reflected in lifestyle and beliefs. Fishwick (1998) found that rural women tended to stay married longer than their urban counterparts; a decision which can be influenced by religious beliefs. Moreover, women in rural areas can be seen as more family and community orientated, distancing themselves from feminist ideology which seeks to change their circumstances (Sachs 1996). The gender focus of the countryside is based on the division of labour in which women are predominantly domestic workers who are defined by the tasks they undertake on the farm (Little 2006, Middleton 1986, Panelli 2006, Stebbing 1984). Along with the patriarchal expectations of cooking etc., women have added responsibility for book keeping, milking cows, running errands, supervising labour and growing and preserving food. It could be argued that this picture is outdated and is not truly reflective of the rural population in Northumberland. Over the last decade, the downturn in farming and associated activities means that the majority of rural women do not live on farms.

Hughes (1997) suggests that, if rural women do gain employment outside of the home they are often seen as 'promiscuous' and are criticised for 'undermining male authority' which disrupts the 'social order' of the countryside. However, there remains a perception that the role of rural women is to run the community, thus enforcing the impression that women are not seen as 'career women' (Little 2002). Those women who wish to break from the patriarchal stereotype meet with various

difficulties. A woman wishing to return to work may find there are a lack of child care facilities, lack of suitable public transport and suitable employment. They may be constrained by the culture and ‘moral social orders in village life...’ (Ibid 130/1). Extra pressure may be brought about by those who frown upon individual women who wish to challenge the stereotype of a woman’s place being in the home (Sachs 1996).

The normalisation of the role of women in the countryside reinforces patriarchal structures which become embedded in the cultural makeup (Aston 1997, Campbell and Phillips 1997, Rawsthorne 2008). These structures, unless challenged, can lead to rural communities becoming ‘inward looking’ with racist and sexist attitudes surfacing (Mendes 2004, Wallis and Dollery 2002), which in turn can lead to domestic violence becoming acceptable behaviour (Dale and Ronan 2000, Laming 2000, Logan et al 2001, Wendt 2009). These factors can often have a bearing on whether or not a woman will report an incident of domestic violence. The ‘power elites’ of rural communities such as landowners, farmers and the vicar is underpinned by the patriarchal structures of the countryside (Little 2002, Woods 1997). Subsequently the ideological nature of patriarchy is used to justify ‘women’s subordination to men’ (Hanmer, Radford and Stanko 1989, 3).

The Countryside Agency (2003) published a Report entitled ‘The Role of Women in the Rural Economy’ which highlights differing specifics of a woman’s role within a rural setting. The Report reinforces some of the views above, but also states that within rural areas women undertake various roles, with some a combination of roles. ‘Some are employed; some run their own businesses or provide support to the family business, while others are unable to find a job. Some women contribute to rural life through voluntary work - others are busy caring for children or relatives’ (Countryside Agency 2003, 4). The Report goes on to state that over the past decade more women in rural areas have taken up paid employment, to the extent that ‘they now make up half of all employees across rural England’ (Ibid). This increase in employment has led to many more women employed in managerial and professional jobs. However, choice can be limited, with those wishing to work often taking low paid employment for which they are over qualified. Jobs include carers, childminders, counsellors,

company secretaries, church organisers, village hall co-ordinators and shop keepers. This overall contribution can mean that women are at the heart of the rural community (Ibid 5, also Sachs 1996). The Report also raises the question of the division of labour. It states that while evidence suggests that more rural women are employed, they are still carrying out the majority of household chores.

In the case study section of the Report over half the women said they do all the domestic chores (Ibid 12). It could be assumed that women in urban areas would be in the same position in relation to household chores. This suggests that the patriarchal society is very much in evidence. Consequently, whilst there has been a recognition as to the role of women in society overall, this indicates that attitudes towards women and male culture remain fixed in a bygone age. This is not confined to rural or urban, working or middle class areas and backgrounds. However, division of labour in farm households continues to be structured by gender, with women typically less involved in decision making and therefore exercising less power.

The issue of class is one which is contested both historically and contemporarily, but social class has been, and still is, a way of understanding society and how it operates (Giddens 2009). There are those who argue that class is no longer a key issue in determining society (Pakulski and Waters 1996). Pakulski and Waters (1996) base their argument for this on the changing industrialist society which, however, is mainly situated in urban areas. Another perspective of class is that it is no longer the white and blue collar divisions of employment, but is more focused on lifestyle choices. Individuals do not align themselves to any class on economic terms, but do so in cultural terms, which include education, the arts and leisure pursuits (Bourlieu 1986). This contrasts with LeRoux et al (2007) who suggest that the boundaries between classes have been re-drawn by both economic and cultural capital.

In rural areas class is still evident and plays an influential role. The middle classes have a more dominant role; which can mean working class interests are unlikely to be represented on parish councils and other influential bodies within the community. These bodies will, more often than not, be monopolised by a 'middle class conservative bias' (Phillips and Williams 1985, 4) and dominated by 'farmers and

landowners,' who pursue conservative policies, (Newby et al 1978) and control the housing and labour markets (Murdoch and Marsden 1994). For Little and Austin (1996) there are two types of power operating in the countryside, the first being class and the other patriarchy. In relation to class Little and Austin (1996) suggest that the idyll of the countryside is created by, and for the pleasure of the wealthy; whilst patriarchy highlights the importance of the family and the role of women within the family unit.

The influence of the middle classes is strengthened by the influx of 'newcomers' to the rural areas who will predominantly be the same class. This results in inter-class conflict between middle class newcomers and working class locals. The increase in middle class newcomers increases house prices to the disadvantage of the local working class (Clope and Thrift 1990). Pahl (1965) in his seminal work identified this phenomenon as far back as the 1960s, which had seen a steady influx into rural areas of the middle classes during the post war period. In his study 81% of incomers had arrived in the period between 1945 and 1961. Pahl (1965) suggests the reason for this influx is that the affluent middle classes have mobility, and therefore can choose where to live, and more often than not choose to live in a rural village but work and socialise in urban settings (Pahl 1965). He also argues that the influx of the middle classes can destroy the community. 'That is not to say that the middle-class people change or influence the working class *they simply make them aware of the national class divisions thus polarising the local society.*' (Pahl 1965, 8 original emphases) This observation of Pahl's challenges Cloke and Thrift's (1990) argument that the countryside is classless but hierarchical.

More recently Robinson (1995, 13) has explained class in political terms of right and left. He suggests the 'romantic right' envisage the countryside in terms of the 'country house, the church and traditional hierarchical rural society based on the squire, person and a differential labour force.' The 'romantic left' see the countryside 'translating into eulogies of rural folk society, the village community, rural crafts and the worthiness of farm labour.'

Whilst class and its influence may be contested, just as the concept of rurality, evidence suggests that they have a great bearing on the cultural make up of the countryside which is underpinned by the patriarchal structures.

Key Findings from the Research Literature

Research from the literature has shown that victims of domestic violence suffer from many different and varied experiences. An exploration of the key findings will complement the discussion in the previous sections which identified issues specific to rural areas and others which are common in both rural and urban areas. There are many issues which were not prominent in the key findings but nevertheless are worth highlighting to give a more comprehensive view of issues faced by victims.

One of the key issues centres on why women stay in violent relationships and the complex issues which arise if they attempt to leave. The choice for women is not straightforward. This choice becomes more complex if women reside in a rural area. The issues discussed below in relation to whether victims choose to stay or leave a violent relationship become more intricate when correlated with the key findings of the research.

There are many reasons why women decide to stay in or leave a violent relationship. The decision to leave is not straightforward and research suggests the violence can escalate after the initial separation of the couple (Anderson 2003, Campbell et al 2003, Johnson and Hutton 2003). Moreover, the victim may not wish to leave and would prefer the relationship to continue in the hope that the abuse stops (Peled et al 2000). Economic considerations also play a prominent role in the decision as to stay or leave. It is generally acknowledged that women have less access to financial and other resources that are more accessible for men (Home Office 2000). Equally as important, many women are economically dependent on their abusive partner; thus meaning they become trapped in a cycle of abuse (Dobash and Dobash 1992). Even if the victims do have access to some finance other factors come into play. These include the need to find alternative accommodation (Hoff 1990), someone to look after pets, inaction by the police and need to stay because of the children. However, if

the children are seen to be in danger of harm then the decision to leave becomes a more urgent consideration (Hoff 1990, Murray 2008). Fear of losing children can leave victims vulnerable. The fear of being accused of poor parenting can lead to low self esteem, even depression, and a reliance on alcohol or drugs (Gill and Sharma 2005, Radford and Hester 2006).

All these issues are complex and show that it is not just a case of victims leaving after the first abusive incident takes place; rather, the victim is faced with a minefield of serious dilemmas. However, Bell et al (2007) found that those women who did leave violent partners and did not return, had a better quality of life up to one year after leaving. Bell et al (2007) also indicate that the focus for agencies should be on how women leave violent partners, with less importance placed on whether they leave or not.

In order to leave an abusive partner, victims generally need support from somebody such as an agency worker (Parmar and Sampson 2007). Support from agency workers can also assist victims deciding to report the incident to the police (Hester and Westmarland 2005). Kirkwood (1993) identified four reasons as to why women may return to their abusive partners. These were that the woman did not see the violence as abuse; they were in denial regarding injuries received at the hands of the perpetrator, social or religious beliefs may have dictated that they stayed; and finally they had no other option. Kirkwood (1993) also found that victims may also place the needs of others before their own. This could be children's needs or to help the perpetrator (See also Murray 2008). If women did leave Kirkwood (1993) identified four obstacles to the women securing their independence. These were; difficulties with securing housing; need for financial support; medical advice and physical and emotional safety. A victim's fear of controlling behaviour by the perpetrator can prevent the victim accessing medical assistance; therefore many incidents go unreported (Radford and Hester 2006).

A victim who is suffering high levels of abuse may fail to report this to relevant agencies because of a lack of self confidence, feeling sorry for the perpetrator, or a concern that criminal justice agencies or social services will fail to keep the concerns

confidential or recognise that the perpetrator is dangerous (Nicholson et al 2003). A fear of reporting an assault can mean victims develop coping strategies to help them to block out the violence (Kelly et al 1999). Victims can also develop safety strategies, such as hiding key documents and possible weapons and keeping out of the perpetrator's way; thus minimising the possibility of provoking an attack (Goodman et al 2003, Kearney 2001, Kelly et al 1999). Furthermore, victims can turn to drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism which can result in them gradually withdrawing from society (Browne and Herbert 1997). Humphreys and Thiara (2002) carried out a survey on women who were suffering from domestic violence. In determining who the victims would most likely report the violence to; 80% called the police, 68% health services, 64% Local Authority housing, of which 20% were refused, and 44% contacted social services if they had children.

Victims of domestic violence can face these issues whether they reside in rural or urban areas. The research shows that, because of rurality, these issues become more significant and complex due to limited provision and access to services, isolation and cultural differences.

Summary

This chapter has undertaken an examination of the emergence and recognition of the victim within the criminal justice system and, in particular, the acknowledgement of victims of domestic violence. This underpins the key findings of the research in relation to victims' experiences and perceptions of victims' experiences of domestic violence. Research shows women are still more fearful of crime and victimisation, even though men have a higher probability than women of being victimised. Most notably however, women are more prone to victimisation in the home (rather than at work) than men.

A definition of rural and rurality has proved difficult as the boundaries between urban and rural are blurring with the advance of globalisation and modernity bringing about constant change. It is also acknowledged that one part of the countryside can be very different from another and therefore one definition does not define the countryside per

se. Therefore, the classifications of rural have identified different concepts of rural which make defining geographical landscapes an easier process. Moreover, these classifications are used to show the rural nature of Northumberland. This chapter has also given prominence to the core components of academic literature which paints a picture of what constitutes 'rural', but also challenges the idea of a rural idyll. Indeed, it has been shown that for victims of domestic violence it is far from idyllic, picturesque and peaceful, but is a nightmare scenario which they can see no escape from.

The section on rural crime evidences that domestic violence is not highlighted as a major concern. The geography of domestic violence has highlighted different issues associated with domestic violence in rural areas. These differences are underpinned by distance and time, isolation and close knit communities which can have both positive and negative implications for victims of domestic violence. The patriarchal nature of the countryside, the power relations and class distinctions which this encourages are hidden behind the mask of rural idyll. The detrimental effect this has on the role of women in general, in particular on victims of domestic violence, is also well documented in this chapter. Finally, the key findings from the literature have identified other issues such as the difficulties associated with leaving an abusive partner, reporting abuse and coping strategies; which underpin those highlighted earlier in the chapter.

CHAPTER 3

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE STATUTORY AND VOLUNTARY RESPONSE

Introduction

This chapter examines the response of the criminal justice and Community Safety Partnership to the crime of domestic violence. The purpose of this exploration is to gain an understanding of how the criminal justice agencies and Local Authorities have addressed the issue of domestic violence from a strategic and operational level over the past forty years. This approach is important as it will assist in contextualising the national perspective of the statutory and voluntary sector response to domestic violence. This context will also be used to reflect the issues in terms of rurality generally.

The focus of the chapter will therefore reflect the research topic by taking a thematic approach to relevant academic literature. The first section will examine how the police response to domestic violence has changed over the past forty years and what factors were instrumental in these changes. This will incorporate a review of the courts, highlighting issues which specifically relate to domestic violence and the research topic. The second section will look crime prevention and partnership working. This will include a comprehensive exploration of the increased role of Local Authorities in tackling domestic violence. It will also examine partnership working and the emergence of Domestic Violence Forums, and CDRP's and how these partnership approaches have contributed to the improved response to domestic violence. The final section concentrates on managing risk and specifically looking at Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) in relation to domestic violence.

Policing and the Issue of ‘Domestics’

The police response to domestic violence from the late 1960s was, at best, inconsistent and at worst inadequate, contributing to an ‘insensitive, ineffective and unprofessional’ approach (Richards, Letchford and Stratton 2008). This is in contrast to recent years where it is generally acknowledged that the police response to domestic violence has improved (Heidensohn 2008, Jones et al 1994). Prior to the rise of the women’s movement in the late 1960s domestic violence had been viewed by the police as not real police work and ‘just a domestic’ that should be sorted out behind closed doors by both partners (Faragher 1981, Newburn and Reiner 2007, Reiner 1997, Wilcox 2006). There was also general agreement that the police, with a culture of masochism and sexism and a strong emphasis on crime fighting, did not take domestic violence seriously (Heidensohn 1992, Hoyle 1998, Young 1991). Edwards (1996) suggested that domestic violence became institutionalised by the doctrine of non-interference in family life and the reinforcement of patriarchal authority, which was underpinned by the belief that a husband should provide protection for his wife. Police attitudes to domestic violence reflected society’s perspective that the issue should be dealt with inside the home and was of no interest to others. There had been a general consensus that the home was a place of security for women and this was highlighted by the differing police responses to public and private violence (Hearn and McKie 2008, Stanko 1988). The police response to domestic violence during this period was affected by the police being unsympathetic to the victim and a feeling that the victim was in some way responsible for their victimisation (Edwards 1989, Peters 2008). Additionally, if the police did take positive action, they felt some victims were still unwilling to proceed with a prosecution. However, some officers continued to think domestic violence was not a criminal offence (Jones, Newburn and Smith 1994).

It was not just the police who held these views. They were, and are still reflected, by some magistrates in their attitude and sentencing practices in domestic violence cases. Amongst the criticism of magistrates for their sentencing is that many perpetrators receive bail for serious assaults (Brookman and Maguire 2003, Richards 2004) or are given a financial penalty or a conditional discharge (Cook et al 2004). Furthermore,

magistrates face criticism for not understanding the complexities which are associated with domestic violence cases (Cretney and Davis 1997); that is needing to understand the reality of domestic violence; being aware that it is a crime which escalates over time and that there is a high probability that it does not consist of one isolated incident. Also when deliberating on appropriate sentences, magistrates require an awareness of perpetrator programmes and what they entail so perpetrators who are most suited to this type of programme are referred (Gilchrist and Blissett 2002).

Further criticism of the police was their reluctance to intervene in incidents because they were more concerned for their own safety (Parnas 1972). There was also evidence that the police preferred not to create a police problem where there only existed a family one (Binney et al 1981) and they felt that domestic violence was a 'social work' issue rather than a police one (English and Houghton 1981). Other officers saw it as 'rubbish work' and this was reflected in comments by the then Chief Commissioner Sir Kenneth Newman in 1984 (Radford and Stanko 1991, Grace 1995, Faragher 1981, Plotnikoff and Woolfson 1998, Reiner 2000, 1985). Subsequently, in 1988 the Chief Superintendent of Streatham Police, Roger Street, acknowledged in a speech to the Annual Conference of the Howard League for Penal Reform that historically the police had seen domestic violence as a 'private matter.' The police, at this time, were ineffective in tackling domestic violence and predominantly worked in isolation, however there was becoming a realisation that they needed to introduce a more co-ordinated approach (Levens and Dutton 1980)

These attitudes and the poor response were related to the masculine culture of the police as an organisation. The masculine dominance within the force was seen as influencing the everyday working practices of the police. The police service from its inception in London in 1829 was male dominated (Emsley 2008). At the beginning of the twentieth century the policewomen's movement emerged and campaigned for the employment of women officers. During the intervening years women were gradually recruited into the force but were assigned their own particular duties, which more often than not were dealing with female offenders, female victims and young offenders (Heidensohn 2008). The introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 saw policewomen fully integrated into the force, meaning they were to be treated on

an equal basis in terms of work and earnings, which had not been the case previous to the passing of the legislation (Harne and Radford 2008, Heidensohn 2008). However, the police were still dominated by a masculine culture and values and there was no evidence of an emerging female culture (Fielding 1994). These types of masculine working practices became known as ‘cop culture,’ and was identified by Skolnick (1966) as having three core elements, which were suspiciousness; internal solidarity and social isolation; and conservatism. Skolnick (1966) also identified how danger, the authoritative nature of the police and the need to achieve results were part of the make up of the urban policeman. However, ‘cop culture’ is a broad heading which encompasses multiple cultures which include sub, street, patrol, canteen, headquarters and cardigan (Westmarland 2008).

Changing Times and Police Attitudes

Until the early part of the 1980s the police had little understanding of the issues related to domestic violence (Dobash and Dobash 1992, Hanmer et al 1989). However there was a realisation among higher ranking officers that the police approach and uneven response to domestic violence needed to change (Hanmer and Griffiths 2001, Hanmer and Sanders 1993). The willingness of the police to examine and change their response towards domestic violence during this period was influenced by public confidence in the police being at an all time low (Jefferson 1990, Newburn 2008, Waddington 1991). This was partly due to the police role in the 1984-85 miners strike and their handling of the inner city riots at the beginning and mid point of the decade (Harne and Radford 2008). The change in attitude of the police towards domestic violence incidents was part of a wider police strategy to regain public confidence (Dunhill 1989). However, there is a contradiction in policing during this period which saw aggressive policing of the miners strike and the inner city riots; this in contrast to their ‘non-interventionist’ stance regarding domestic violence (Harne and Radford 2008).

The realisation by the police of the need to change was, to some extent, informed by the emergence of academic research (Dobash and Dobash 1979, Faragher 1981). For example, an observation of 5,688 patrol officers dealing with domestic violence

showed that more often than not officers did not arrest the perpetrator, even though they had grounds to do so (Oppenlander 1982). In some cases officers' decisions were moral judgements which took precedent above their legal obligation to take positive action; thus going some way to explain the actions of officers in cases of domestic violence (McLeod 1983). Although there was a realisation of the need for change in higher echelons of the police there was still, by the mid 1980's a 'cult of masculinity' and a dominance of male values similar to those found at a rugby club (Smith and Gray 1985), which involved consuming large quantities of alcohol (Gregory and Lees 1999).

The glorification of violence by some officers underpinned the 'cult of masculinity' (Brown and Heidensohn 2000, Coliandris and Rogers 2008, Fielding 1994, Reiner: 2000, Waddington: 1991). To address the issues of masculinity it was felt that more women police officers should be recruited and fully integrated into the force (Smith and Gray 1985). During this mid 1980s period the police were still known to downgrade domestic violence calls and make them low priority. Responses from officers could include giving advice and in some cases, if the victim wished to pursue a legal remedy, advising them only to take civil action (Richards, Letchford and Stratton 2008). This attitude continued to prevail throughout the 1980s. The streetwise attitudes of more experienced officers were influential on younger officers. They were put under pressure to conform to the outdated attitudes and working practices towards women in particular, and especially domestic violence, of their senior counterparts (Bourlet 1990). However, some younger officers ridiculed their more experienced colleagues who were resistant to change (Hoyle 1998).

To address some of these issues the Metropolitan Police held an internal investigation into their policy and practices towards domestic violence in 1985. This resulted in the publication of the Metropolitan Police Report of the Police Working Party in Domestic Violence (1986). In the Report there was acknowledgement that domestic violence was a major problem within society which, in turn, placed demands on police resources. The Report also conceded that the police response to domestic violence was not what it should be and in a majority of cases was 'inappropriate and unhelpful.' This admission was compounded by the lack of guidance and policy on

how to deal with domestic violence incidents. Moreover, there was a lack of awareness among the majority of officers regarding other agencies such as Women's Aid and referral procedures to such an agency. The Report also highlighted the fact that domestic violence training for police officers at all levels was virtually non-existent (Dobash and Dobash 1992). A further Report during this year also stressed the importance of training for officers. The London Strategic Police Unit (1986, 46) said police training on domestic violence should include;

- How to assist a women attacked in the home
- Awareness of non-physical and non-apparent physical injuries
- Awareness of immigration legislation
- Police officers and judges to undergo training on racism and sexism and the impact of the legal system on women
- Information about Women's Aid and other agencies

The police training manual for this period however contradicted what the London Strategic Police Unit (1986) had recommended. The manual suggested that most incidents of domestic violence were non-violent, that incidents only happened in poor areas and that more often than not the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol (English and Houghton 1981); thus reinforcing the myths and stereotypes which had persisted over many years.

Alongside the Metropolitan police review the Woman's National Commission (WNC) Report (1986) highlighted a number of issues and proposed reforms which they felt would result in a comprehensive change, especially by the police, to the issue of domestic violence. These changes included recording statistics, policy implementation, training of officers and support for victims. Moreover, they found that the classification of domestic violence incidents – disturbance, assault and criminal damage – did not highlight the seriousness or severity of the incident. The WNC was an attempt to bring about practical changes and provide advice which would assist victims, the police and court personnel (Smith 1989). Subsequently, the WNC Report led to Home Office Circular 69/1986 which incorporated many of the issues raised by the WNC (Jones, Newburn and Smith 1994).

Although these changes were welcomed, further research showed that few women actually reported domestic violence incidents to the police (Radford 1987). Those who did were not satisfied by the police response. The reasons given were that the police seemed disinterested, slow to respond and did not tell the victim what had happened after the arrest. There were also concerns that the original report of an incident was not followed up. When asked to comment on the differences in their experiences of the incident being dealt with by male and female officers, there were two different sets of opinions. One group of women said that their experience of female officers was no different from their male colleagues. Whereas a second group said they would prefer to speak to a woman officer. Some victims felt that if they had the opportunity to speak with a woman officer their experience would be more positive and the female officer's empathetic approach may influence their male colleagues (Ibid).

In the same year Radford's (1987) research was published, the Met were promoting positive action to be taken at incidents of domestic violence, in particular pro-arrest policies; and had started to establish Domestic Violence Units (Harne and Radford 2008). These Units were introduced to assist victims in prosecuting the perpetrator and also to co-ordinate service provision for victims, but had received a mixed response (Grace 1995, Hague 2000, Hoyle and Sanders 2000, Lewis et al 2001, Walker and McNichol 1994, Walklate 2001a). The Met were instrumental in adopting change in response to domestic violence and also influenced other forces into adopting the changes (Jones, Newburn and Smith 1994). Whilst these advances were welcome, implementation was patchy and was mainly concentrated in the Metropolitan Police area. Furthermore, at this time, discussions between the women's movement and the police had led the police to agree to a more pro-arrest policy (Stanko 1989) which was criticised in some quarters as compromising the police's 'neutral or objective approach' to domestic violence (Hanmer, Radford and Stanko 1989).

Despite these changes a seminal study by Edwards in 1989 argued the police still focused more on street crime than domestic violence; with the police approach to street crime being proactive, whilst taking a reactive approach to domestic violence.

Edwards argued that the police were quite happy to enter premises of known drug dealers; but reluctant to enter when the incident was related to domestic violence. She also found that many officers felt the victim contributed to the violence because they were a 'nagging wife' or the perpetrator found the victim's behaviour 'sluttish' (Ibid). With statistics for domestic violence being low, there was a perception that domestic violence was a one off incident or a trivial matter. Patriarchal attitudes and 'sexist stereotyping' were reflected in police practice and belief that domestic violence only took place in working class communities and was normal in run down urban areas. However, in middle class areas police tended to take the view that alcohol, redundancy and stress may be contributory factors to the abuse. Subsequently any decision taken by the police was based on stereotypical attitudes (Ibid).

Edwards' (1989) study showed that the rhetoric of change was not necessarily matched by action. During the 1980s the police response became more visible due to the introduction of BCS, local crime surveys and continued campaigning of the women's movement. The momentum for change was promoted by high ranking officers, specifically the Met, and an increasing amount of academic literature; which uncovered inconsistencies in the police response to domestic violence. The literature confirmed that officers' historical attitudes towards domestic violence still remained. Momentum was now such that further progress was inevitable and the dawning of a new decade would see attitudinal changes towards the policing of domestic violence.

Policing Domestic Violence in the Early 1990s

At the beginning of the 1990s the publication of Home Office Circular 60/1990 focused primarily on the police response to domestic violence. The main thrust of the Circular was to offer guidance to all police forces on the issue of domestic violence and intended to help and 'encourage' the police to deal with domestic violence by developing and publicising force strategy and policy.

The Circular also called for a more proactive response and identified three key areas; arrest, recording and a thorough investigation into cases of domestic violence. Chief Officers were advised to set up domestic violence units within their force, 'where it is

practicable and cost effective to do so' (Home Office 1990a, 4). In rural areas it was felt it would be more 'cost-effective to appoint a liaison officer with part time responsibility for domestic violence'. The Circular also stressed that those officers who were tasked with domestic violence should have up-to-date knowledge of local agencies so they were in a position to refer victims to relevant agencies if and when appropriate (Ibid). The Circular also gave guidance to police on their initial response to domestic violence incidents. These included how to distinguish violent and non-violent incidents; a recognition that the first contact between the police and the victim is most likely to be by telephone; a mechanism to establish and check any previous history of the relationship and what appropriate action to take at the scene of the incident, for the victim, perpetrator and any witnesses. There was also guidance on the procedure to charge the perpetrator (Home Office 1990a, 4-7).

As a result of Circular 60/1990 by 1995 all police forces in England and Wales had domestic violence policies; even though there was disparity in their implementation and recording practices were still seen as 'inadequate and inconsistent.' This contributed to confusion in terms of which incidents had resulted in arrest, charge or conviction (Grace 1995, Plotnikoff and Woolfson 1998). Many forces still did not have a 'coherent training strategy' which would allow the implementation of their domestic violence policy (Plotnikoff and Woolfson 1998). Early independent evaluations of Circular 60/1990 produced mixed results although progress had been made, albeit slow (Hanmer 1990, Mooney 1994). Police attitudes were found to be more positive although prejudiced attitudes towards victims still existed (Hanmer and Saunders 1993, Hanmer et al 1989). These prejudiced responses meant that many officers considered victims as deserving and 'the lowest of the low' and 'low life.' Victims who were interviewed were satisfied with the improved advice, information and support they received from the Domestic Violence Officers, but more critical of the lack of positive action taken by the police against perpetrators (Walker and McNichol 1994).

There were also Home Office funded evaluations into the impact of Circular 60/1990. Those areas selected for evaluation were Projects based in Merseyside, Killingbeck West Yorkshire and Islington London. The Merseyside Project focused on women

who experienced repeated incidents of domestic violence (See Lloyd et al 1994). The objectives of the Project were to issue pendant alarms to those in need; set up police database on police attendance; improve the transfer of injunction details from the courts to police; to offer support and information to victims of domestic violence and raise awareness of domestic violence within the force personnel. Within a five week period 35% of victims had required a repeat visit and 45% a third visit. Pendant alarms had given a 'feel good factor.'

A second Merseyside Project was evaluated which looked at the work of a police divisional Domestic Violence Unit covering the twelve months between 1991 and 1992 (See Farrell and Buckley 1999). Findings from the evaluation showed that overall the Domestic Violence Unit had a positive impact; although the evaluation was sceptical as to whether there was any real benefit to those victims who reported frequent incidents of violence.

The second Project evaluation was Killingbeck in West Yorkshire. This Project, as with the Merseyside one, also looked at repeat victimisation but from a three tiered approach. The three tiered approach focused equally on the victim and perpetrator thus allowing an 'interactive crime prevention approach' which offered protection to the victim, but also addressed the behaviour of the perpetrator. For this to work in practice, there was a requirement for all police officers to implement the domestic violence policy in full. This, if followed, would lead to pro-active policing of the incident and multi-agency working to protect the victim and work with the perpetrator to address his offending behaviour. The findings showed that a three tiered approach had reduced repeat call outs. There were also positive outcomes in dealing firmly with perpetrators by the police and a more consistent approach in how they dealt with the victim. Furthermore, there was a decrease in the time between repeat call outs. This consistency encouraged victims to request police assistance. Some of the issues raised by the evaluation were, as with the Merseyside Project, the need for baseline data so that perpetrators 'de-motivation' for abuse could be measured.

The Islington Project was based on a Project which had run in London Ontario Canada based on a multi-agency approach to domestic violence incorporating the

criminal justice system, the objective of which was to improve the effectiveness of the criminal justice response to domestic violence (Canada see Jaffee et al 1984, 1986, Islington see Kelly 1999). The aim of the Islington Project was to make contact with the victim within 24 hours of the police being called to an incident. The findings highlighted difficulties over the three year period of the Project between the role of civilians policing domestic violence and the response of police officers to emergency calls. These problems intensified over the three year period. Victims felt that domestic violence should be classed as a crime. Researchers argued that the need for protection and support for the victim should be the priority. As with the Killingbeck Project, pro-arrest policy and the remand of the perpetrator received a positive response.

These findings were in contrast to Mooney's (1993) study carried out in Islington where victims wanted the violence to stop and the perpetrator to change their behaviour. The evaluation found that confidence in the police had increased. However, the police themselves faced problems which ultimately had an effect on women's experiences of domestic violence. These included assumptions by the prosecutors that victims will withdraw their statements; failure to provide victims with protection to allow them to give evidence; police not making clear to the court the pressure that women come under to withdraw their statements, which has repercussions on bail applications, and to take breaches of injunctions seriously (Buzawa and Buzawa 1991, Cammiss 2006, Cretney and Davis 1997, Harris 2000, Hester et al 2003).

In another study (Bourlet 1990), thirty one cases of either ABH or GBH had resulted in only two criminal charges. Moreover, in twenty five of the injury cases, where criminal charges could have been brought, none were made and most women just wanted the police to remove the perpetrator from the house. Generally women did not find the police very helpful when dealing with an incident (Ibid). Out of 43 police forces only 16% had an advisory policy or guidance on domestic violence. Only 16% provided further training for officers after their two year probationary period. Most officers interviewed agreed that domestic violence incidents were now part of their everyday work, with some feeling frustrated and a small minority saying it was a

waste of time and the police should not get involved. Asked if violence was ever justified a significant number said 'yes' whilst a small minority said 'under extreme provocation' (Ibid).

A further study by Hanmer and Saunders (1993) included interviews with agency workers and the police. Agency workers interviewed were pro-police, with only one male respondent stating that the police should not interfere in domestic violence incidents. Anti-police feelings started to emerge if the police response to the domestic violence incident was not what the victim expected or wanted. Furthermore, findings showed that social workers and the police have stereotypical views of each other's role when the issue is domestic violence related. The indifference towards the police started to emerge when the victims felt they were not being believed and taken seriously. When asked what needed to be done to encourage women to report to the police, responses included change in attitude, more training on domestic violence and more awareness of services (Ibid). Interviews with serving officers revealed that most felt they should 'listen but not interfere,' because in husband and wife situations they saw their role as a referee, and their presence at the incident was to 'cool a situation or diffuse it.' Nearly all officers interviewed said they would only make an arrest as a last resort. Officers also felt that domestic violence was a civil offence rather than a criminal one, and many felt that domestic violence incidents were outside police work and more social work orientated (Hanmer and Saunders 1993, 311-326).

These particular findings highlight many issues but those regarding prosecution are pertinent and are underpinned by magistrates' understanding of domestic violence when they are faced with a prosecution. Research has shown that those perpetrators who are given a court order to attend a programme are less likely to repeat their violence in the following twelve months, compared with those perpetrators who are not instructed to attend a domestic violence programme (Syers and Edelson 1992). The Magistrates Association has also called for magistrates to approach domestic violence cases sensitively, be aware of children's needs and not to make decisions based on stereotypes (Smart 2001). Magistrates also need to be aware of how solicitors try to minimise the behaviour of the defendant by using the behaviour of the partner, or the victim's failure to fulfil the stereotypical role of a woman (Cretney and

Davis 1997). This can be difficult because of the disparaging attitude of many judges towards domestic violence (Buzawa and Buzawa 1991). The defence in domestic violence cases use differing themes and strategies in an effort to undermine the prosecution case by concentrating on common myths and misconceptions surrounding domestic violence (Hartly 2001, Peters 2008). The need to take a zero tolerance approach to domestic violence has not been fully appreciated by the magistrates (Lewis 2004).

Mode of trial guidelines state that domestic violence cases should be dealt with the same as any other. However, there is frustration at the number of cases withdrawn (Cammiss 2006, Harris 2000, Hester et al 2003). There is also evidence to suggest that prosecutors minimise the impact of domestic violence, thus meaning the case will remain in the Magistrates Court (Cammiss 2006). This was re-enforced by Cammiss (2006) who conducted research based in a CPS area which consisted of a city and small town, and found evidence of prosecutors 'manipulating difficult evidence' to make sure the case would not be referred to the Crown Court. Research into the sentencing practices of magistrates in domestic violence cases was undertaken by Gilchrist and Blissett (2002). Their research was based with the West Midlands Domestic Violence Project which was a multi-agency domestic violence initiative whose partners included the Children's Society, Woman's Aid, Probation and the West Midlands police. They had three questions regarding magistrates and sentencing they wished to research. These were;

- When would magistrates consider a domestic violence programme with Probation appropriate?
- What type of incident and what level of violence would they consider to constitute an appropriate referral to a domestic violence programme?
- What aspects of a violent incident would lead magistrates to recommend prison rather than community disposal?

Gilchrist and Blissett (2002) observed a magistrates training day where a sample of magistrates had been invited who had an interest in domestic violence. In total sixty seven magistrates completed a sentencing exercise based on a self-completion

questionnaire. They were asked to consider six vignettes and suggest appropriate sentences and explain the reason why they came to their conclusion. The six vignettes were incidents of domestic violence and stranger violence and all supported a charge of ABH. The general findings were that magistrates tended to consider probation with an appropriate programme when dealing with domestic violence, but a custodial sentence was preferred for the crime of stranger violence. Evidence also showed that magistrates minimised the domestic related violence and blamed the victim for the violence occurring. Examples of victim blaming included; 'are there any courses the woman can attend to learn how to avoid being hit' and 'I would say that the husband is justified in being aggrieved at things not being ready'. An example of excusing the violence included; 'the man was under stress'.

In terms of the police, Jones, Newburn and Smith (1994) carried out research in four police areas (A, B, C and D) exploring if responses to child abuse, rape/sexual assault and domestic violence had improved. In the case of domestic violence there was evidence in Force A of policy changes but no evidence of a written one. In one sub-division officers each carried information cards with relevant agencies that victims may wish to access. Force B had set up a Domestic Violence Unit – with two PC's. A division order had been circulated detailing how domestic violence should be dealt with. Domestic violence incidents were recorded separately from other violent incidents, and the Women's Refuge Co-ordinator was working closely with senior officers. In Force C, the Superintendent had said that domestic violence cases should be thoroughly investigated and implemented changes in policy. But Jones, Newburn and Smith (1994) had found little evidence of what they were.

In Force D, the Chief Constable had issued a statement that said domestic violence should be tackled seriously. This included circulating details of refuges and other services. Within a sub-division, the head of CID (a woman DI) checked whether domestic violence had been taken seriously. She had also introduced a domestic violence register to record incidents so that officers attending an incident would know whether it was a repeat incident, as well as checking records and asking officers to explain their decisions. Women's Aid had reported vast improvement in the police approach to domestic violence.

In research carried out in the Thames Valley police area, sixty five women who had suffered four or more domestic violence incidents over the previous year were interviewed (Hoyle and Saunders 2000). The study examined the police pro-arrest policies, the establishment of Domestic Violence Units and the introduction of Domestic Violence Officers. Findings showed that those women who called the police wished to be separated from the perpetrator on a temporary basis or just in certain circumstances. Arrest did not take place if this resulted in a temporary or permanent separation. It was found that one of the main reasons why a victim decided not to press charges was because the initial arrest had achieved what the victim wanted. Those women who had left the perpetrator had found Domestic Violence Officers helpful, providing them with support and information on other relevant agencies and co-ordinating what action needed to be taken. Hoyle and Saunders (2000) are critical of the pro-arrest policy of the police, arguing the victim choice approach can expose the victim to manipulation from the police to prosecute or from the perpetrator to drop the charges. They say that the victim should be supported regardless of the choice they have made.

Many of the legislative reforms of the 1980s and 1990s regarding mandatory arrest, prosecution and imprisonment have been criticised for their failure to provide a safer environment for victims of domestic violence. This, for some, is the result of the criminal justice system not just failing to, but being unable to challenge the 'patriarchal structures' of the system (Morris 1993, Smart 1989, 1995, Snider 1998). However, there are others who argue the problem lies in the practicalities of implementing the legislative changes (Edwards 1989, Hanmer 1989, Kelly 1999). Even with the introduction of various strands of legislation there is little evidence to suggest a reduction in prevalence rates of domestic violence during this period. In fact they are most likely to have increased (Morris and Gelsthorpe 2000). Hoyle's (1998) research showed that pro-arrest and prosecution policies could do more harm than good, whilst Sherman (1992) suggests that arrest can lead to an increase in violence. Sherman's (1992) research was a US study which examined the effects of the police response to domestic violence. Sherman's (1992) findings indicated the need to replace mandatory arrest policies with policies that provided more options.

Pence and McDonnell (1999, 42) give five reasons as to why victims may not benefit from pro-arrest and conviction policies. However, they do point out that there needs to be some sanction and with no intervention the violence will continue and in many circumstances escalate. The five reasons are;

- Not every case of domestic violence is best resolved in a courtroom
- Every act of domestic violence does not necessarily lead to a serious attack on a victim
- When victims call for help, they are not calling to activate a long, hostile criminal proceeding. They are usually calling to make something happen immediately
- Many individuals will not be helped by a prosecution
- Some cases in which an assault did occur are almost un-provable in a courtroom using the standard of proof required in a criminal trial

Policing Domestic Violence Post 1997

From 1997 onward, the emphasis on partnership working increased and the role of the police, in relation to domestic violence continued to be under scrutiny. Problems identified in the previous sections were still a concern. The publication of *Policing Domestic Violence: Effective Organisational Structure* in 1998 highlighted how administrative issues impacted on the overall response to domestic violence. An inconsistent approach to domestic violence was linked to there being no agreed definition. The monitoring of performance standards were poor and should have monitored quality of service and quality of response.

There was also little monitoring of the service victims received and repeat victimisation was interpreted differently by police officers. Subsequently, training of officers was to be targeted more carefully towards senior and junior officers, as previously training seemed to be developed on an ad hoc basis. Training of officers had, for many, been a concern for a number of years (Buzawa and Buzawa 1991, Hague and Bridge 2008, Hanmer and Sanders 1993, Hoyle 1998, Morley and Mullender 1994).

In 2000 the Home Office revisited Circular 60/1990 regarding police accountability in their responses and actions to domestic violence situations and revised certain sections. The main points revised included guidance for police attending a domestic violence incident, in that they must not just take oral or written evidence, but look at all the associated evidence from the incident. This practice would increase the opportunity of a successful prosecution. Furthermore, the importance of evidence gathering becomes even more significant if the victim decides not to give evidence. In this instance the recommendations were that the police must 'remain impartial' as there are many reasons why the victim may wish not to prosecute. All the evidence should be given to the CPS, and it is they who decide whether or not to prosecute (Ibid, 4-5).

The Circular also recommends that forces should have a policy on domestic violence; thus giving officers guidance on what is expected of them when attending incidents of domestic violence. To increase support for the victim the police must 'maintain regular contact with victims', and convey information including developments in the case, bail up-dates, location of offender and details of court appearances (Ibid, 6). If a victim decides to withdraw their statement, then police should acquire a full withdrawal statement if criminal proceedings have commenced. Whilst safety of the victim is paramount, officers must take responsibility for fully investigating the incident they attend.

A full investigation, including prosecution and conviction, can improve the quality of life for victims (Lewis 2004). However, Lewis (2004) contrasts this with a body of research which contradicts the views which she initially highlights. These include that victims have limited or no knowledge of the legal system which would enable them to progress their case. Civil remedies are not consistently applied by the police and courts and also perpetrators are not 'systematically prosecuted' (Cahn 1992, Lewis 2004). Women become more at risk of violence if courts allow the perpetrator continued access to the children (Hester and Radford 1996). Furthermore, defence references can be given which state the perpetrator needs contact with the child (Hester et al 2003). The criminal justice service 'applies a single incident framework' to incidents of domestic violence rather than taken into consideration the on-going

process of power and control employed by perpetrators (Lewis et al 2001).

Some of these concerns can be rectified by the introduction of more advocacy projects which can impact on victims reporting earlier and realise a reduction of repeat victimisation (Kelly and Humphreys 2000, Lewis 2004). By taking onboard what the victims would like to happen, which is not necessarily a conviction, and by listening to the preference of the victim could lead to a reduction in violence (Buzawa et al 1992, Ford and Regoli 1992). The collection of evidence, especially photographic, can improve the victim's experience of the criminal justice system (Edwards 2000, Lewis 2004). However, the criminal justice system needs to identify which route would be most beneficial to the victim and recognise that all cases will be different and a single approach is not the solution (Lewis 2004).

Furthermore, underpinning the revised Circular was the publication of the What Works Reducing Domestic Violence pamphlets. In relation to the police some of the issues highlighted by Hanmer and Griffiths (2001) focused on an uneven response to domestic violence by the police and the impact this had on victims. Hanmer and Griffiths (2001) recommended that a more consistent approach by the police would lead to more victim satisfaction (See also Buzawa et al 1992, Ford and Regoli 1992, Lewis 2004). This should be underpinned by more training for officers, effective partnership approaches and domestic violence policies with guidance implemented in full.

More contemporary research shows that many of the long standing issues are still prevalent with emerging issues such as the effects of a performance management ethos. An examination of performance management shows that it is imperative to monitor performance; to measure improved response and identify who contacts the police for intervention. Homicide reviews, the need to use police data as a way of understanding the vulnerability of the victim, the need to be of assistance for repeat victims, and maintaining a register to enable gaps in services to be identified are also highlighted as areas for improvement (Stanko 2008).

A study (Loftus 2009) on a police force's pro-arrest policy for domestic violence revealed that the force had introduced a Domestic Violence Intelligence Record. This

enabled officers to gather data on perpetrators and allowed them to monitor and target offenders. All divisions of the force had a Domestic Violence Liaison Officer. A majority of officers had a negative attitude when responding to domestic violence incidents, but overall were sympathetic and professional in their approach. The pro-arrest policy was welcomed by some male officers as an excuse to make an arrest. However, female officers expressed concern at the policy fearing that victims may receive a 'backlash' from the perpetrator in the future. The study also found that the 'misogynistic' elements of police culture were being eradicated and if they did surface, were strongly challenged (Ibid).

The evidence above shows that incremental changes in the policing of domestic violence over the past forty years have resulted in a much improved response to victims of domestic violence. However, despite these developments and subsequent change of approach, there still remain some issues. Domestic violence training for officers, whilst improved, is still highlighted as problematic and not implemented by some officers when responding to domestic violence incidents. A further issue is the reluctance of the police to take on board the wishes of the victim; in a number of incidents the victim would just like the abuse to stop, or the perpetrator removed for a short period of time, rather than be convicted. Also the police need to differentiate between cases, appreciating that not all cases are the same and thus needing to respond to the specific issues of each case. There is also shown to be a lack of awareness by some officers of domestic violence services in their area which means they are unable signpost victims to relevant services. Appropriate sentencing of perpetrators by magistrates is still problematic. This, more often than not, stems from magistrates' lack of understanding of the complexities of domestic violence which leads some to blame the victim for the abuse.

Crime Prevention and Partnership Working

Crime Prevention and Inter and Multi Agency Working

It was the mid 1980s when the government started to focus more on preventing crime and this was underpinned by the Interdepartmental Circular 4/1984 which advocated crime prevention being the responsibility of the whole community (Home Office 1984). There were four stages as to how this co-ordinated community response would develop. These stages centred on a thorough analysis of the crime problem; a need to examine ways in which the problem could be addressed; the practicalities and cost of the proposed methods and the implementation of what had been decided as the most effective (Crawford 1998a). The outcome of Circular 4/1984 meant that the debate had shifted towards crime prevention which subsequently led to the Five Towns Initiative in 1986 and the Safer Cities Initiative in 1988. These initiatives were an attempt to bring together partners to instigate crime prevention initiatives. Partners were drawn from the public and private sectors with the main steer coming from the police who heavily influenced the crime prevention agenda. Funding was provided on a short term basis which allowed preventive measures to be implemented (Crawford 2007).

Newburn and Jones (2002) identified concerns which had emerged since the early 1980's regarding multi-agency working. The first was power relations between the different agencies, where they found difficulties in sharing joint or common aims. This, in turn, reflected a difference in structure and culture of a wide variety of agencies. In some partnerships one agency attempted to set the agenda which, depending on the partnership, was more often than not the police. There could also be resistance and non-cooperation from certain agencies. During this period there was resilience from the police, especially the 'old school' officers who argued that the police should stick to what they do best; crime fighting (Heidensohn 1992, Hoyle 1998, Young 1991). However, evidence did not back up their claim as detection rates for crime were relatively low (Squires and Measor 2007).

The publication of Circular 44/1990 titled 'Crime Prevention – The Success of the Partnership Approach' identified six components which were essential if the partnership working was to be successful. These were structure, leadership, information, identity, durability and resources. For Gilling (2005) strong partnerships need leadership, a strong consensus among partners, resources, time and durability. But for partnerships made up of different agencies the main ingredient was trust (Webb 1991). For Tilley and Read (2000) the concept of partnership is 'not rocket science.' However, as can be seen in practice, these complex issues make partnership working anything but straight forward.

Up until the late 1980s Local Authority involvement in crime prevention had been virtually non-existent, although some were involved in the Domestic Violence Forums in the early 1990s. This, however, was to change with the election of a Labour government in 1997. The introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 gave Local Authorities a major role in crime prevention. This formed part of the modernisation of public services and a focus on the role of governance. The emergence of governance reflected an 'enabling role' which led to the formation of networks within the local state (Gilling 2005). Governance revolved around performance, measurement, evaluation and improvement (Hughes 2007); in short a culture of 'cost efficiency' (Rogers 2006). Modernisation for Raine (2001) consisted of eight main areas – policy, outcomes, pragmatism, partnership working, what works, cost-effectiveness, public involvement and image management. The modernisation of local government was designed to achieve a 'radical transformation' within Local Authorities (Downe and Martin 2006).

The modernisation project was seen as a fundamental shift from the centrist approach of the 1970s and the lack of concern with co-ordination during the 1980s (Perri 6 et al 2002). However, it did take on board and develop some of the aspects of the new management approach of the 1980s and government rhetoric on the virtues of partnership working at the beginning of the 1990s. This period ushered in the notion of governance which Rhodes (1997) linked to neo-liberal reforms – i.e. modernisation, privatisation and contracting out. Governance was seen to be a different approach to thinking about the way government operates (Jones 2007). This

new era brought in new managerial practices based on ‘market principles’ and ‘corporate identities’ which reflected the values of;

- Competitiveness
- Risk taking
- Domination of territory and individuals

(Hopton 1999)

The drive for efficiency and effectiveness was underpinned by Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI), ring fenced funding and was strengthened from 2005 by the Local Government Modernisation Agenda (LGMA). However, there remain many sceptical voices as to the success of the government’s governance model and modernisation agenda. In terms of the BVPI in 2005 the Local Government Association (LGA) published a document entitled; ‘Implementing the New Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI).’ It stated that domestic violence and how to tackle it was the ‘core business’ for Local Authorities and was not ‘an optional extra.’ The LGA said the role of the Local Authority in tackling domestic violence could be divided into three key areas; their contribution to local partnerships, their corporate response and direct service provision. This, suggested the LGA, would complement work by criminal justice agencies and the voluntary sector (LGA 2005, 3).

The document also identified concerns it had with the revised BVPI 225 regarding domestic violence. One of the LGA’s main worries was that in two-tier Local Authorities BVPI only applied to the District Councils and not the County Council. Further concern was expressed at the number of actions Local Authorities needed to comply with, which the LGA suggested would be very difficult to measure and would possibly conflict with other indicators. There was also apprehension that some of the indicators may not work in the way it was anticipated because of either ‘possible perverse incentives or because they may not effectively measure the desired outcome.’ Finally, concern was expressed at the lack of priority given to outreach services for children and adults (LGA 2005, 6). The issue of two-tier authorities was further complicated, as in some areas information was being collected in all Districts in the County, whereas others provided it on a countywide basis with necessary

adaptations for the Districts. This model of working, the LGA suggested, would save time and resources. Also Domestic Violence Co-ordinators should concentrate on partnership working, be pro-active and implement change and ensure that Forums do not become a 'talking shops.' In two-tier areas the LGA suggested that the employment of more than one Co-ordinator in the County was not a good use of resources, which would be better spent funding a countywide team of strategic partners. There was also concern expressed that many agencies were not collecting domestic violence information or at best very little, for their area and therefore could not share between relevant agencies. For two-tier Authorities it was suggested that the County Council take the lead with the agreement of the Districts.

At the time of the research Northumberland was a two-tier Authority. The main problems arising for Northumberland regarding BVPI 225 revolved around each District (Northumberland had six) having to have a multi agency strategy and also a Domestic Violence Forum in each District which convened at least four times a year. In 2005 Northumberland was in the process of compiling a countywide strategy, which would be more practicable than six individual strategies. However, three Domestic Violence Forums existed which covered the county. To increase this to six as stipulated by BVPI 225 was far from practical. This situation showed how the BVPI 225, as the LGA alluded to, was not a realistic proposition for two-tier Authorities. For counties such as Northumberland, added tiers of bureaucracy would be of little benefit to victims of domestic violence.

Additional issues for two-tier Authorities could mean they may not be involved in local issues, and, if they were, where did accountability lie (Rogers 2006). Furthermore, there could be complex funding arrangements (Crawford 2007, National Audit Office 2004) and delays in decision making at County level, as decisions needed to be processed through committee structures (Byrne and Pease 2008). All this is set against a background of political antagonism between District and County (Rogers 2006).

The marketisation culture of the public services has been found to espouse masculine values and a culture of new managerialism which does nothing to challenge the

patriarchal nature of Local Government, but places patriarchy in a new form (Hopton 1999). Within Local Government there is a culture of 'institutionalised sexism' which limits the opportunities to modernise. Furthermore, the recent changes have re-enforced the 'macho management styles' of the past; in which elected members adopt aggressive attitudes towards staff, and controlling leadership styles of management are common (Broussine and Fox 2002).

The holistic approach to governance is not without problems and include;

- Impatience
 - Too many initiatives
 - Fragmented holism
 - Integration without coordination
 - Badly designed bidding competitions
 - Over hasty measurement of wrong things
 - Intolerance of failure
 - Hogging the lessons at the centre
 - Conflicting policy priorities
- (Perri 6 et al 2002)

Further to these shortcomings, structures of Local Government can hamper progress and the role of the public manager should be about letting go and not gaining control. However, there are four main areas which Perri 6 et al (2002) suggest would underpin the effective governance of local authorities. These being;

- Probity
 - Efficiency
 - Effectiveness
 - Accountability
- (Ibid)

Some of the issues raised by Perri 6 et al (2002) are also of concern to others. Downes and Martin (2006) suggest that a number of local agencies still struggle to work closely, with many unable to understand the objectives of modernisation and how this links with policy. Others have come to the conclusion that modernisation is

not much more than ‘a flag of convenience’ to which are attached different meanings depending on the audience being addressed (Fairclough 2000, Finlayson 2003). The shortcomings are further complicated by a ‘postcode lottery’ in the way support services for domestic violence victims are provided, and there is a need for Local Authorities to take ‘urgent action’ to provide a level playing field of services. There also needs to be consistency in the funding of voluntary sector services for female victims of domestic violence (Coy et al 2007). Other key findings raised by Coy et al also revealed;

- A third of Local Authorities in the UK have no specialised domestic violence support services
- 1 in 3 Local Authorities do not have a women’s refuge
- Only 1 in 5 Local Authority areas have a specialist third sector sexual violence service

(Coy et al 2007)

In comparing Northumberland with Coy et al’s (2007) findings, Northumberland did have specialist services. These were run by two separate agencies with both services part-time and situated in the more rural West and North parts of the County. Therefore, there were no specialist services in the most urban part of the County, although the refuge was situated in the South East of the County. This location made accessibility for those residing in the West and the North difficult due to distance, time and transport issues. There was no specialist third sector sexual violence service.

One way Local Authorities became involved with domestic violence was through their Housing Department’s allocation of housing to victims of domestic violence and also their links with the local refuge. Housing and refuge provision, as well as employment for women suffering from domestic violence, have been found to be a major issue when women are contemplating leaving their violent partner (Bell et al 2007, Davies 2008, Dobash and Dobash 1992, Logan and Walker 2004). These issues Kirkwood (1993) found to be a major obstacle to victims securing their independence. Women who leave violent partners are generally re-housed in Local Authority housing or in some cases by a Housing Association. They are very rarely, if at all,

able to afford to become an owner occupier (Hoggart and Henderson 2005). A large proportion of homeless females are victims of domestic violence and women who are not physically abused are in many instances not seen as homeless (Morley 2000). When being accepted as homeless Local Authority rules mean that the individual must accept the property offered. However, if the victim refuses the offer because the area is unsafe, or the property is in poor condition, they would not be offered an alternative. Housing Departments have a tendency to allocate their worst housing stock to those most desperate for accommodation (Mama 2000, Wilcox 2006).

In addition evidence suggests that the culture within many Housing Departments has always been obstructive towards women suffering from domestic violence (Binney et al 1988, Hanmer and Saunders 1984, Rai-Thiara 1997, Wilcox 2006); staff may not take victims seriously and accept they are homeless. This results in them not being re-housed quickly (Humphreys and Tiara 2002), usually because of long waiting lists (Levison and Harwin 2001). These findings go against the DoE Code of Practice 1991 which stated, that whenever possible, victims of domestic violence should be interviewed by a member of housing staff who is of the same sex. Moreover, the member of staff should have received some form of domestic violence training. This would have highlighted that staff should not ask the victim for proof they are suffering from domestic violence, and more importantly, not treat them as unintentionally homeless (DoE 1991).

The problems of housing for victims of domestic violence were addressed in a Report published by the ODPM (2002) titled 'The Provision of Accommodation and Support for Households Experiencing Domestic Violence in England'. The Report analysed a wide range of issues, such as steps to seeking help; homelessness and temporary accommodation; being re-housed; support services; staying put and inter agency working. The conclusions were that many Local Authorities were making efforts to avoid using inappropriate accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast. Refuges were perceived by both users and professionals as providing a unique and highly regarded service. Both felt there was scope for Local Authorities to look at their temporary accommodation portfolio and recognise refuges as part of the provision available to them rather than viewing them as entirely separate. Moreover, many Authorities had

shifted from an approach whereby existing tenants experiencing domestic violence were virtually always transferred to another property, to one where they were encouraged to remain in the family home. Overall, the authors felt that those Authorities in the study that dealt most successfully with accommodation and support issues around domestic violence had adopted a co-ordinated approach, which involved different Local Authority Departments, other statutory agencies and the voluntary sector (ODPM 2002, 17/18).

Refuges play an important role in assisting the victim to leave the home but also support the victim's recovery (Dominy and Radford 1996) and provide a place of empowerment (Murray 2008). While refuges are essential it must be recognised they provide only temporary accommodation (Dobash and Dobash 1992), and research has shown that victims have a generally positive experience of refuge provision and outreach services (Dunn 2008, Hague and Mullender 2005, Wilcox 2006). The services refuges normally provide include 1-1 support, support groups, counselling and assistance with access to local services (Levison and Harwin 2001), with victims also wanting information and emotional support (Dunn 2008, Maguire and Corbett 1987). However, there are some victims who choose not to access a refuge as they may not like communal living or being close to other victims', and the location of the refuge may be some distance away from home which could mean networks of support are broken (Levison and Harwin 2001). Others find refuge accommodation as a step down in status and fear they will lose their independence and are fearful that the perpetrator may find out where they are staying (Wilcox 2006).

The refuge in Northumberland is a purpose built one which has accommodation for up to eight at any one time. At the time of the research the majority of the residents came from areas situated outside Northumberland. The refuge was run by a Housing Association and was not staffed twenty four hours a day. An outreach worker was employed and the refuge maintained links with local services and Forums. However, one outreach worker could not adequately provide cover for a County the size of Northumberland.

The Children and Domestic Violence in Rural Areas Report (Countryside Agency 2001) findings produced a wide ranging summary of key implications for policy and practice. The section on refuge services highlighted two relevant areas of concern. Firstly, 'the government, through the Inter-Departmental Group on domestic violence, should urgently address the need for statutory funding to enable children's services in refuges to comply with the required staffing ratios and space standards in order to prevent children's services being reduced or closed down'. Secondly, schools and refuges should liaise with one another to provide education and talks to staff and children on refuge life. Through the development of such partnerships and advertising in the media, refuges can help to promote awareness of their service and dispel many of the misconceptions surrounding refuge life. However, the discourse regarding the benefits of partnership working is not new for refuge staff who have been engaged with partnership working since they were founded (Hanmer, Itzin and Quaid 2000).

Accommodation continues to be a major problem for victims of domestic violence, which is more pronounced with the reduction in Local Authority Housing. Refuge provision is essential but there still remains a shortage of places and resources in rural areas (Hall and Whyte 2003, Wilcox 2006). However, as noted, refuge staff have always tried to work in partnership and now, with the advent of the partnership agenda, Local Authority staff, especially Housing, are becoming active partners.

The Morgan Report and Partnership Working

In 1990 the Morgan Committee was set up to report on the slow development of multi-agency working. The Report was published in 1991 and suggested that progress would be improved by taking a broader approach to crime prevention. In short a focus on community safety. Morgan (1991) suggested that community safety should be coordinated through the statutory sector at the expense of the voluntary sector in an effort to address the issue of crime prevention. This would be underpinned by ring fencing budgets to assist in implementation (Davis 2003, Gilling 2007). The Report also stated 'at present crime prevention is a peripheral concern to all agencies involved and a truly core activity for none of them' (Morgan 1991, para 3.15). The

Report also highlighted what it saw as the Government's ad hoc approach to crime prevention. The community safety agenda revolved around evidence based practice of what works and what was best value for the money available (Crawford 2007).

The Morgan Report was left on the shelf until the election of a Labour Government in 1997 which saw the issue of community safety and crime reduction as the main components in relation to crime prevention. Government, however, underestimated the capacity of partnerships to deliver what they intended, largely due to the number of agencies having different priorities for outcomes from what the Government initially intended (Gilling 2005).

It has been acknowledged that crime related partnerships do not necessarily meet on equal terms, with the police having greater control which they use to influence and allocate resources. The police are enthusiastic towards partnership working; but like to set the agenda and dominate proceedings, choosing to ignore partnership working when they feel it will impede their agenda (Gilling 2005, Hughes 2007, Morley and Mullender 1994, Smith 2000, Squires and Measor 2007). Nevertheless, the benefits of partnership are that they bring together various agencies which possess expert knowledge in their field. This pooling of resources allows a holistic view of aims and objectives (Crawford 1998b, Crawford and Jones 1996, Sampson et al 1988).

However, partnerships can become bureaucratic, affecting service delivery and resulting in conflict, duplication and friction (Crawford 1998b). Research has shown that tensions and conflict do exist between different agencies, especially crime and criminal justice. The tension and conflict revolve around the diverse culture, traditions and ideology of agencies, and the differing priorities of each agency, including the statutory and voluntary agencies (Blagg et al 1998, Burney 2005, Coliandris and Rogers 2008, Crawford 1997, Crawford and Jones 1995, Newburn 2002, Pearson et al 1992, Phillips 2002, Robinson, Hudson and Brookman 2008, Rogers 2006, 2004, Sampson et al 1988).

Crawford and Jones (1996), whilst concurring that there is conflict and tension within partnerships, suggest that there is also conflict avoidance. Partnerships who 'circumvent' conflict are not necessarily productive (Gilling 2005). One way to deal

with conflict avoidance is for the conflict to be settled outside of the partnership in a 'shadow setting.' However, it is more than likely that dominant partners will determine who is included and these type of partnerships have vague and multiple aims and objectives (Crawford 1997). If the conflict is not dealt with then it will fester and ultimately start to dominate the partnership, which may result in weaker agencies being excluded from the process or cease to be invited. This can lead to false expectations and a complete lack of trust between partners (Crawford and Jones 1996). This was reflected in Northumberland, with tensions arising between partners especially in relation to the NDVP, which ultimately became personal and for a period did dominate partnership working.

There are different models of partnership, which can be bureaucratic; inter-personal, which is favoured by community safety; and a loose network. Problems arise as formal meetings can become non productive and become a talking shop; whereas an informal partnership is hard to monitor or evaluate in term of progress (Crawford 1998b, Hague, Mullender and Aris 2003, Skinns 2005). Some agencies complain that partnerships do not represent the views of front line workers because of the stipulated hierarchical grade for each agency representative. This gives the impression of a top down approach. One solution could be a tiered approach (Crawford 1998b, Hague and Mullender 2005). A note of caution against this approach is there may be co-operation at one level but disagreement and conflict at another level. There can always be mistrust which can reflect stereotypical views partners have of other agencies even though organisations may not have worked in partnership previously (Little and Gelsthorpe 1994).

In recognition of these problems with partnership working NACRO (2001) identified what ingredients were needed for a successful partnership. These included that each member of the partnership should be clear as to their role within the partnership and why they are attending, and that all partners should share the same goals and work together to achieve them. More importantly the partnership should have an atmosphere which allows debate, criticism and new ideas to flourish which are acted on or resolved in a constructive and supportive manner. Ineffective partnerships are ones in which one particular agency dominates the agenda, or there is a 'culture clash'

between agencies represented which is not addressed.

In a further attempt to give guidance to partners the Home Office (2003a) published a paper titled; 'Break the Chain – Agency Guidance for Addressing Domestic Violence'. This replaced the 1995 inter-agency circular on domestic violence. The paper was aimed at raising awareness as to how agencies working together could tackle the issue of domestic violence. The paper identified basic points which included all agencies being aware of the level and nature of domestic violence and what is needed to address the issue, whether this is policy or practice. It was also recommended that domestic violence training should be available to all staff and agencies should be made aware of all domestic violence services available in their area, including both the statutory and voluntary sectors. Moreover, these services should be accessible to all that require them, including BME communities, the elderly, those with disability, drug and alcohol problems and same sex relationships. Agencies should create an environment which encourages the reporting of domestic violence. Multi-agency partnerships should include a definition of what constitutes domestic violence, and an active and participatory Domestic Violence Forum.

Domestic Violence Forums

The emergence of Domestic Violence Forums came about in the late 1980s when the first pilot Domestic Violence Forums were established and mainly led by Local Authorities, Women's Aid and the refuge or by the police (Harwin, Hague and Malos 1999). The introduction of Domestic Violence Forums was underpinned by the Home Office Review Report on Domestic Violence (Smith 1989), and by the National Association of Local Government and Women's Committees Responding with Authority (1989). Both these Reports advocated the need for Domestic Violence Forums to tackle the issue of domestic violence on a local basis. Complementing these reports was the publication of Home Office Circular 60/1990. Furthermore in 1995 an Inter-agency Home Office Circular, titled 'Inter-agency Co-ordination to tackle Domestic Violence' was published. This offered further guidance on a partnership approach to tackle domestic violence which in turn led to more local Domestic Violence Forums (Hague 2000). One of the main functions of the Forum

was to promote change within partners, advocating that a good Forum needed to produce good practice guidelines, develop training, domestic violence policies and also produce posters and leaflets which would raise awareness of services for victims (ACPO 2004, Dominy and Radford 1996, Rogers 2006). There was a warning that what was not needed was complacency to set in, with the production of a directory of services becoming the only objective (James - Hanman 2000).

A 'What Works' pamphlet on domestic violence fora was published in 2000. The pamphlet identified that the main participants in Domestic Violence Forums were the refuge movement and the police; with the recommendation that the police shouldn't take the lead on or dominate proceedings as this may bring to the fore difficulties in relation to other agencies (Hague 2000).

It was recognised that the voluntary sector can be under represented and marginalised by the dominance of statutory agencies (See also Hague and Mullender 2005, Hughes 2007) and the strength of many Forums comes from the activism of grass roots members who have the 'dynamism' to be proactive in addressing the problem of domestic violence. However, Forums must not become a 'smokescreen' and 'face saver' giving the impression that something is being done about domestic violence, when actually nothing changes (See also Welsh 2008). A majority of Forums start as inter-agency networking groups, but complacency should not allow the Forum to become a 'talking shop' (See also Hague, Mullender and Aris 2003, Skinns 2005). To ensure this does not transpire Hague (2000) recommends the Forum should agree terms of reference, produce an Action Plan which includes regular reviews and updates, and that identified tasks are manageable to those who are nominated to undertake them. The main work a Forum should undertake includes monitoring domestic violence and identifying gaps in provision, investigating how these gaps can be filled, co-ordinating the work of members and agencies, raising awareness of domestic violence and examining ways of prevention.

The first national study of multi-agency domestic violence work was carried out between 1994-1996 and found there was generally a lack of resources which restricted Forums from progressing initiatives (Hague, Malos and Dear 1996). At this particular

time many statutory agencies were facing cut backs and therefore what they could contribute financially was limited. To counter this Hague et al (1996) found some agencies offered venues for meetings and administrative support at no cost. They also found that both statutory and voluntary sector agencies found it difficult to take on board extra duties that may have been asked of them by the Forum. The lack of resources, interviewees acknowledged, limited how pro-active the forums could be (Crawford and Lister 2004, Hall and Whyte 2003, Walton 2006). Those who did have access to extra resources employed Domestic Violence Co-ordinators or Development Workers. The type of work undertaken was of an educational and awareness raising nature as well as developing training programmes on domestic violence. It was also felt that these type of workers gave 'direction and purpose' to the Forums. Respondents also felt that funding for service provision, such as refuges and out reach work, should take priority over inter-agency work. On the role of Co-ordinator/Development Worker respondents felt they gave the Forum 'presence, focus and direction.' It was also felt that the worker should have relevant experience of Women's Aid and the refuge, as well as an understanding of domestic violence and the complex dynamics of abuse. Moreover, for the worker to be effective it was felt that they must have administrative support in order to carry out their work and make a significant difference (Hague et al 1996).

Difficulties and tensions included how to maintain the enthusiasm of agencies once the initial momentum of setting up the Forum had subsided. A number of Forums felt constrained by some agencies, which had little understanding or experience of domestic violence (Hague and Bridge 2008). There was also a lack of clarity of roles within the Forum and inconsistency in attendance (Welsh 2008). This took the form of different people representing the same organisation at different meetings. There was tension between agencies in general but more so between the statutory and voluntary sectors. Tensions also arose between service users and service providers. There was also a need to discourage the statutory sector from dominating proceedings. This may have occurred due to resource difficulties for voluntary sector organisations (Robinson, Hudson and Brookman 2008, Welsh 2008).

Few of the Forums had started to address the issues of equality for ethnic and religious groups and also issues of class, disability and sexuality. This failure led to a number of these groups feeling excluded, which resulted in their non attendance at Forum meetings.

To assist domestic violence Forums in developing strategies the Home Office published 'Developing Domestic Violence Strategies – A Guide for Partnerships' in 2004. The document stressed that a strategy is worthless unless partners were committed and strategies include a range of achievable actions (Rogers 2006).

The document also stated that partners needed to create an environment where workplace policies were developed and information for victims was easily accessible. In addition, there was the need to continue to raise awareness of the nature of domestic violence and to take on board issues facing BME communities. Some of these issues had already been stipulated by others, most notably the 'What Works' pamphlet (Hague 2000). Supporting People and the Local Authority Housing Departments were highlighted as two key organisations with which partners should develop strong links to secure housing for victims. It was recommended that development of strategies should be evidence based and focused, and thought needed to be given as to how victims could be supported within a multi-agency context.

This last point, how to involve victims in Domestic Violence Forums, was looked at in more detail by Hague (2005) who found victims were outnumbered and their voices unheard, which was mainly due to meetings being dominated by management figures. Victims felt they were patronised by management and some Forums were just talking shops. Hague (2005) also cautioned against victims being used by partners as a way of enabling them to guarantee they meet consultation targets. Core functions of a Forum are identified by Rogers (2006) as being providing training, keeping details of victims and ensuring that perpetrators are held to account for their actions.

More contemporary research was undertaken by Welsh (2008) who examined the partnership approach to domestic violence in two Northern English towns between 1998 and 2001. She suggests that Domestic Violence Forums were a focus of 'joint

talking' rather than 'joint working,' and the Forums became a smokescreen for doing something but in reality nothing changed (Welsh 2008). Of the organisations who attended, the voluntary sector and domestic violence support agencies showed a greater commitment to bring about change. However, of the statutory agencies, the police attended on a regular basis. She also found that poor attendance inhibited trust between agencies.

Attendance was particularly poor from criminal justice agencies including the courts, judges, magistrates, solicitors, CPS and Probation. From the Health sector there was poor attendance from A&E and local sexual health services (See also Byrne and Pease 2008, Crawford 2007, Hughes 2007, Phillips et al 2002). Those from the statutory sector who did attend were there because their job required them to; or in some cases individuals had an interest in domestic violence or women's issues which underpinned their attendance. Many of those who did attend did not have the powers to make a decision and had to go back to their workplace in order for a management figure to make a decision (See also Hall and Whyte 2003). The findings of Welsh (2008) reflect many of the issues highlighted in this research; particularly Forums being 'talking shops,' poor attendance of certain agencies and the lack of decision making powers of individual attendees' at Forum meetings.

From the three initiatives which formed the nucleus of her study, Welsh (2008) found that most Forum meetings would last up to two hours. During this time discussions related to funding, covered general information on domestic violence, then individuals would discuss their own work. From the findings there was very little, if any, proactive multi-agency work being undertaken in relation to domestic violence. What became apparent was that discussions in meetings did not translate into service provision for victims. Moreover, there was a lack of commitment from the statutory agencies especially, and in some cases a lack of understanding of the role domestic violence played in their day to day work (Welsh 2008).

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 stipulated the need for all Local Authorities in England and Wales to have Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) to assist in tackling crime and disorder in their authority area. These partnerships were to consist of both statutory and voluntary sector agencies which operated in the authority area. This multi-agency approach was intended to remove the conflict between agencies and for partnerships not to be dominated by the police (Home Office 1998c, Loveday 2000).

Police influence in partnerships did not wane as was predicted with the introduction of CDRP's; and the police still continued to dominate the agenda (Hughes 2007, Gilling 2005, Smith 2000). These multi-agency partnerships created an 'interface' between agencies which was shaped by power struggles, personalities, different cultures of agencies and agencies pursuing their own personal agenda (Squires and Measor 2007).

Evidence also suggests that the police and Local Authorities often delegated their responsibilities of managing audits, consultations and developing strategic approaches to Community Safety Officers, who were seen as the 'engine room' of the partnership (Hughes 2007). Criticism of this approach was that some Community Safety Officers did not have any relevant qualifications and also lacked any training which would have assisted in undertaking their designated duties and that these short falls could ultimately impact on the functions of the CDRPs (Rogers 2006). In some CDRPs there was a reliance on the police and Local Authorities to drive forward the partnership (Gilling 2005, Hughes 2007, Hughes and Rowe 2007, Phillips et al 2002). Multi-agency working since the 1980s has been fraught with problems, some criticisms surrounding multi-agency partnerships have stated that they 'represent a false consensus' and have not resulted overall in improving safety for victims of domestic violence (Gupta 2003). Skinns (2005) found partnership members had a 'loathing' of each other but continued to meet for the purposes of funding.

There are also some agencies which are reluctant to be part of the CDRPs and there continues to be a reluctance to share information; perhaps due to conflict of interests as well as cultural assumptions. Many CDRPs lack capacity and expertise to deliver and are dominated by statutory sector organisations (Byrne and Pease 2008, Crawford 2007, Hughes 2007, Phillips et al 2002). There can be two different types of partnership; one which takes a liberal approach, whilst the other follows an enforcement agenda. However, some agencies will not have anything to do with the police due to cultural differences between organisations (Hughes 2007). Police dominance of CDRPs can lead to other agencies being used to help the police meet their agenda objectives (Crawford 1998, Gilling 2005).

A Home Office Guidance for CDRPs published in 2007 identified the hallmarks of an effective partnership. These hallmarks included empowered and effective leadership, visibly accountable intelligence led business processes, engaged communities and appropriate skills and knowledge. Other notable inclusions in the guidance were the importance of performance frameworks, preparation of three year partnership plans, delivering effective solutions to identified priorities and evaluation of individual projects. Overall, partnerships should react to local needs which in turn means that the partnership should be kept to a manageable size, but there is also a need to identify and include key partners so the process can become forward looking (Abrar 2000).

Those partnerships wishing to be forward looking need to gain an understanding of how domestic violence policy is developed and implemented at a local level. To do this, there needs to be a fundamental awareness of the 'dynamics' between women and men. Consideration needs to be given to how their agendas differ and how the development of policy is in the interests of women (Abrar 2000). There is an 'ingrained cultural hostility' to women, and especially towards those who take a feminist stance, which ultimately results in them campaigning at the margins rather than at the centre of policy decision making (Ibid). Abrar's (2000) study of three Local Authorities found that domestic violence received greater importance when feminists and feminist perspectives are integrated into local inter-agency partnerships.

Consultation with statutory partners is an important function of the CDRP. A study of how the CDRPs implemented their consultation processes found that dialogue with statutory partners, especially the police for crime audits, had been a positive experience. Other statutory agencies, where consultation had proved beneficial, had been Local Authority Housing Departments and the Probation Service. Of the different methods used for the consultation process, surveys had proved to be the most popular. Other methods had included the use of the media, police community consultative groups and focus groups. Consultation with the public had also been seen by many partnerships as an effective way of developing their strategies. However, two-fifths of respondents identified problems with the consultation process. One of these identified issues was the 'failure to deal with particular crime problems' of which one was domestic violence (Newburn and Jones 2002). Overall there was 'confusion' among partnerships as to exactly what the aim of the consultation process. It was also recommended that different methods needed to be used to acquire data from different groups and that data collection should be 'realistic and appropriate' (Ibid).

Home Office Report 56/2004(a) gives a more detailed analysis as to how CDRPs should deal with the issue of domestic violence. All CDRPs in England and Wales were asked to complete a questionnaire on how their partnership addressed the issue of domestic violence. In total there was a 92% response rate. Of those respondents 63% said they consulted with victims of domestic violence. However, when asked how they facilitated this, 200 out of a total of 376 respondents said this was via other agencies. 75% said they regularly collected domestic violence data, with the police being the main source. Some of the reasons given for not collecting domestic violence data were a lack of arrangements to do so, incompatible systems and that this data was collected by other agencies. When asked what the barriers were to improving or increasing service provision over 50% said it was due to a lack of funding. One fifth indicated that 'challenges' of partnership working was a 'key' reason for not improving or increasing service provision.

Agencies who were involved in the partnerships showed that 81% of partnerships had police representation, 66% had Local Authority representation, 65% refuge staff and 61% Woman's Aid. Key targets set in relation to domestic violence were set out in PSAs. However, they more often than not were related to the reduction of incidents or the increase in reporting of domestic violence incidents. Other shortcomings within CDRPs include lack of data sharing, a lack of expertise for audits and consultation and not being able to set 'SMART' targets, with non-statutory agencies in most cases, 'frozen out' of the decision making process (Ibid).

Managing Risk

Having identified shortcomings, incremental change and issues around partnership working related to the police response to domestic violence, this section explores another partnership in which the police play a fundamental role. During the 1990s the issue of risk and risk management had moved from the periphery to centre stage, not just in criminology but other disciplines. Within criminology, risk and risk management was seen as a way of controlling crime, with the three main components being prediction, assessment and reduction (Loader and Sparks 2007). The move towards risk management was seen by some as a new culture of control (Newburn 2007) and by others as a 'new penology' (Feeley and Simon 1992). Feeley and Simon (1992) argued that the emphasis of risk management was not on the elimination of crime but to manage the problem in what they termed actuarial justice. In short, managing certain groups, rather than addressing the problem and exploring ways of rehabilitation. Another criticism of risk assessment was that it only targets those medium and high risk cases, which were determined by the number of ticks on the checklist (Harne and Radford 2008).

In terms of domestic violence and risk management, the police had a major role to play. Through the development of risk management they became more proactive than reactive with a focus on preventative work and identifying potential risk posed, which would be guided by 'justifiable and defensible' decision making which was based on;

- All available information having been collected, recorded, and thoroughly evaluated
- Policies and procedures having been followed
- Reliable risk assessment methods having been used where available
- All reasonable steps having been taken and any information acted upon
- Practitioners and their managers having communicated with each other and with other agencies, having been effective and proactive, and having adopted an investigative approach
- Decisions having been recorded and subsequently carried out

(Richards, Letchford and Stratton 2008, 109)

For this to work in practice, the police have to work in partnership with relevant agencies, such as the Probation Service, and undertake an information gathering exercise. In relation to domestic violence there are three key stages to risk. These are the identification of the individual who is perceived a risk; an assessment of the individual to determine the level of risk posed, which will identify who is at risk and the impact the behaviour will have; and the management of the identified risk which explores what multi-agency strategies are needed to manage the identified risk. However, one individual's assessment of risk may differ from another; therefore to address this, risk is defined by the OASys assessment tool as;

'a risk which is life threatening and/or traumatic, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible.' (Home Office 2002)

There had been concerns that Basic Command Units (BCUs) may not have been using the same assessment tool. Therefore ACPO (2007) introduced a model of risk assessment which included that forces should operate one domestic abuse risk identification; use one assessment tool which is ACPO compliant; and forces should have not more than one risk identification check list (ACPO 2007). The benefits of this include; more arrests, improved standards, better risk identification and reduction in repeat victimisation (Ibid). However, Hoyle (2008) carried out a critical analysis of risk assessment in domestic violence cases and concluded that while risk assessments

were still in their infancy, the jury was still out as to their effectiveness. Hoyle (2008) also suggests that regardless of the number of evaluations, the risk assessment tool will remain limited in preventing domestic violence, especially the more serious cases which have never before come to the attention of the police or other agencies.

Partnership working was further enhanced by the introduction of MAPPA. Section 67 and 68 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 stated that Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) would be introduced to enhance partnership working. This came into force in April 2001 and the MAPPA objective was to identify serious violent sexual offenders, including those perpetrating domestic violence. Agencies involved were the police, Probation, Health, Youth Offending Service, Housing and Social Services (Walton 2006). The purpose of the partnerships was to share information, assess and manage risk of serious violent sexual offenders within the community. It was felt that these partnerships would help in breaking down cultural barriers between the agencies especially regarding information sharing. Furthermore, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 made it a duty for all agencies to co-operate with requests for information sharing across all forty two MAPPA areas (Bryan and Payne 2003, Peay 2007).

In 2007-2008 MAPPA guidance had been updated to include BVPIs. There had also been introduced an electronic MAPPA register called ViSOR which allow offenders and those deemed a risk to be logged electronically; thus making information more accessible for partner agencies. Early criticisms of MAPPA included that there was a lack of consistency in the development of MAPPAs across the forty two areas. Some had not integrated with their local child protection committees, as well as their local CDRPs (Byran and Payne 2003). To address some of these early problems the MAPPA Guidance (2003b) was published by the Home Office. This was to assist MAPPAs to improve and have a higher degree of consistency and quality across all forty two areas. It was also intended to strengthen the strategic management of all partnerships. This links with the emphasis on risk management which had become a main focus for dealing with crime. Closely associated with this was the move towards a more pro-active crime prevention model of policing.

The ACPO (2004) Guidance on Investigating Domestic Violence had stated that assessment of high or standard risk individuals should only be undertaken by specialised officers who had received relevant training. Moreover, risk management should also be subject to frequent monitoring. A Home Office (2006a) publication regarding lessons learned from previous domestic violence enforcement campaigns recommended that the best way of monitoring risk was by using Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing (MARAC). This included information sharing between agencies, both statutory and voluntary, to enable a specific response to the needs of victims and children if they were present. If this process was executed in a professional and focused way this would allow better management of the perpetrator and reduce risk for the victim. Research undertaken into the effectiveness of MARAC showed the level of repeat victimisation dropped from 32% to below 10% and victims who refused to make a complaint also dropped from 60% to under 5%. Moreover, those who had suffered from repeat victimisation and called out the police did so at less severe levels of violence than previously. This figure may reflect the confidence victims had in the response they would receive and would therefore make the call earlier than they may have previously (Home Office 2006a). From the evidence, the risk management strategy was starting to make inroads. Moreover, early indications showed that MARAC was having a positive impact.

In 2008 the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment, and Honour-Based Violence Risk Model (DASH) was introduced. This complemented the ACPO model but widened the net to include stalking, harassment and honour based violence. The three main components of DASH were;

- Risk identification by first response police staff
- The full risk assessment by trained police staff
- The risk-management and intervention plan by trained police staff

Summary

This chapter has identified how the police response to domestic violence has moved from one which was ambivalent to one where they work in multi-agency partnerships

to provide an adequate response and take into consideration the needs of the victim. Whilst the masculine culture of the police remains, there has been a cultural shift in their attitude to domestic violence. The realisation by high ranking officers that they needed to change was, in the main, due to the ever increasing amount of literature and studies highlighting major flaws in the police approach to domestic violence. In contrast the chapter has shown how magistrates approach to domestic violence is still problematic; especially in terms of sentencing perpetrators. The chapter has also shown how the approach to domestic violence has progressed from a partnership one to one of governance, with Local Authorities playing a more significant role. Therefore the literature reviewed in this chapter allows for the thesis to be set in the context of the relationship between partners from the voluntary and statutory sector, especially criminal justice agencies, and examines how they work from a strategic and operational level in addressing domestic violence. Incorporated within this framework is how, from a strategic level, the governance of domestic violence has been addressed from a criminal justice and Local Authority perspective.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology and methods used in this research and is intended to set out how the aims and objectives of the research were met. It explains how the research was initiated, planned and completed; thus enabling the research findings to be contextualised. The chapter comprises of three sections. The first section outlines the aims and objectives of the research. The second section gives the theoretical perspective, together with a detailed overview of Northumberland, in ethnographical terms, encompassing service provision and local government structures. The third section details the methodology and methods undertaken during the research. This incorporates the interview process, data processing and analysis and the main ethical issues underpinning the research.

Aims and Objectives

This PhD explores and dissects the views of stakeholder representatives, including criminal justice and community safety personnel, on their response to domestic violence in rural Northumberland; specifically examining issues relating to domestic violence in a non-urban context. The area of research stems from an interest in domestic violence, which was informed by having worked with perpetrators during my time employed by the Probation Service. There is now a vast array of academic and scholarly literature regarding domestic violence, but much of it is written from an urban perspective and within an urban environment.

The rural nature of domestic violence has been, and to some extent is, a secondary consideration for researchers. Therefore the main aim of the research was to explore the way in which domestic violence is affected by rurality, and of criminal justice responses to domestic violence in rural Northumberland. In particular the study is an exploration of the impact rurality has on victims, an examination of their needs and

experiences in relation to the provision of services including the criminal justice system, along with community and voluntary agencies.

The objectives of the research were to;

- To develop a framework of classifications of rurality which will assist in defining the different aspects of rurality and also illustrate the distinctive geographical landscape of Northumberland
- Examine and develop an understanding of rurality and what impact it has on women's experiences of domestic violence and service provision.
- Explore the nature and extent of domestic violence in rural Northumberland, women's experiences of domestic violence in rural Northumberland, and victims and survivors experiences of criminal justice, community and voluntary agencies responses.
- To map and explore the provision of services for victims of domestic violence in rural Northumberland and establish how access, take up and efficacy of these services may be effected by the rurality of the county.
- Establish the extent by which agencies have knowledge of issues surrounding the rural nature of domestic violence; and of their own and other agencies responses. This includes examination of referrals across agencies, partnership working and the nature of 'relevance' of service provision in relation to rural victims and survivors.
- Examine the issues specific to rural areas and their effect upon domestic violence. For example, the nature of 'community,' 'transport networks,' the 'structure of service provision' and so on.

To achieve these aims and objectives it was necessary to identify and interview a number of victims and agency representatives. Three victims were interviewed and

access to agencies and organisational representatives was impressive. However, as a result of only three victims being interviewed the direction of the research started to develop in different ways. The change in the context of the thesis, in moving to examine the strategic and community safety response, reflected the on-going policy, political and strategic changes which had taken place over the past twenty years. This coincided with the introduction of the Domestic Violence, Victims and Crime Act 2004. The Act was introduced during the midpoint of the thesis and with the change of focus gave the thesis a strategically focused thread.

The thesis explores the relationship between service provider's views – police, housing, Probation etc - of victim's experiences of domestic violence in a rural area, and their perceptions of the service and strategic response to domestic violence in rural Northumberland. It is set in the context of the relationship between partners from the voluntary and statutory sector, especially criminal justice agencies, and how they work from a strategic and operational level in addressing domestic violence. Incorporated within this framework is how, from a strategic level, the governance of domestic violence has been addressed from a criminal justice and Local Authority perspective. The thesis demonstrates the specific issues in rural areas affecting response and service delivery. For example, the thesis puts forward the view that issues such as distance and time, the location of services and isolation are specific to rural areas and simultaneously impact on victims' experiences. The thesis includes an analysis of the Domestic Violence Forums and the implications for partnership working within a two tier Local Authority structure. This analysis will also incorporate an examination of the police response to domestic violence both at an operational and strategic level, and how the Domestic Violence Forums and the police linked with the Local Authorities and particularly the CDRPs. This analysis is complemented with a comprehensive collation of relevant data including minutes from forum meetings, draft strategies, spending plans and CDRP Audits. The period covered will be from 1999 until the implementation of the Domestic Violence Strategy in 2007

Theoretical Perspective

Theoretical perspectives which have informed the research are centred on feminist ideology, especially radical and socialist strands. For radical feminism their main focus is on men's oppression of women and an understanding that the considered place of safety, i.e. the home, is in fact the place where a vast majority of criminal activity perpetrated by men takes place (Chesney-Lind 2006, Walklate 2001). For socialist feminists the two main strands are to understand the criminal behaviour of the powerful and the powerless in the context of a capitalist society based on patriarchy; where power lies in terms of class and gender and how the powerful use it both legally and illegally (Messerschmidt 1993, Walklate 1998, 2001b). Locating these two strands of feminism within this research gives a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of women's oppression, especially in relation to domestic violence, but also highlights how oppression is underpinned by the capitalist system in the form of patriarchy. Moreover, it examines how power, especially male power, is used to re-enforce oppression and patriarchal structures along the lines of class, race and gender. To address gender inequalities an analysis of patriarchy was therefore essential. Walby (1990, 20) argues that patriarchy is 'a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.' It is through these 'social structures and practices' that men derive their power and choose to use it in the home and workplace as a way of underpinning their subordination of women. However, there was also a need to explore and understand the motivation of some men to exert their power in terms of violence and abuse whilst others choose not to. Consideration also needed to be given to how men perceive their masculine behaviour as socially acceptable (Walklate 2001b).

Another theoretical perspective which informed the thesis was one of rurality. However, a theory of rural is beset with complexities which made it difficult to focus on a particular aspect which defines a geographical space. There are many ideas of what constitute rural, however, for the purposes of this thesis the main focus was space, community, distance, time, isolation, exclusion and to a certain extent, power. This by no means dismisses others such as poverty and disease. These ideas needed to be set against a background of change during the last 50 years, which has brought

about new buildings and roads, changes in agriculture, forestry and industry. The impact of which has changed the geographical rural landscape. The complexities arose when trying to distinguish how these ideas determine what constitutes rural. The work of people such as Cloke (2003), Marsden (2006) and Woods (2006, 2011) discuss how people's perceptions of rural at times can hide the true lived realities of the rural experience. For example, the perceived notion of the idyllic countryside which ignores the reality of isolation, exclusion, space, distance and time. Moreover, Marsden (2006) concedes that research on rurality is difficult when trying to define and conceptualise exactly what rurality is. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis a classification of rural was undertaken to distinguish the differences associated with rural areas and space. This allows a theory of rurality to be constructed which attempts to develop a framework of rural space and place it in the context of rural Northumberland; thus facilitating a clearer insight of the findings.

Northumberland

This section provides a detailed map of the socio-political landscape of the County using data mainly from the 2001 census. This will enable the thesis to be contextualised and analysed in terms of the geographical nature of the County and how this relates to the classifications of rurality. Also included are details of the structure of local government arrangements, which includes a comprehensive account of the partnership arrangements within the County and how this manifests itself in relation to the management of domestic violence both at an operational and strategic level.

Northumberland is the most northern county in England, bordering Scotland to the North, whilst to the West it shares boundaries with Cumbria. To the South it shares a boundary with County Durham and with Tyne and Wear. The District of Berwick in the North has, at its centre, the market town of Berwick itself. The remainder of the District consists of smaller villages, such as Wooler along with small farms. Much of the surrounding area is agricultural land, largely grazing and arable. The A1, the main road into Scotland, dissects the County, bypassing Berwick to the North and Alnwick and Morpeth to the South. Other road networks are made up of more minor B roads

and country lanes. The main East Coast rail line, from London to Edinburgh and Glasgow also runs through the County. The railway link is well used, with stations at Morpeth, Alnmouth and Berwick being particularly popular with commuters travelling to Edinburgh or Newcastle for employment.

To the South lies the market town of Alnwick, the home of the Duke of Northumberland. The district of Alnwick is similar to Berwick, in that it is made up of towns such as Amble, together with the more remote and isolated communities of Alwinton and Snitter. The remoteness of some of farms and small hamlets is compounded by being situated within the Cheviot Hills. During a severe winter, residents in these areas are often cut off from main towns or villages for days or even weeks.

The areas surrounding the villages and towns are largely farm land and forestry, with associated employment. The Duke of Northumberland is the main landowner and one of the main employers in this area. For the communities on the coastline, employment opportunities present from seasonal tourism. A small, localised fishing industry operates from coastal villages and towns such as Berwick, Boulmer and Amble.

In the centre of the County is the district of Castle Morpeth and the town of Morpeth itself. Morpeth is also a market town and recent town centre regeneration has attracted national companies such as Marks and Spencer and Waterstones which has reinvigorated the shopping centre. The County Council headquarters is situated on the outskirts of the town in a purpose-built County Hall. The rest of the district is made up of small villages such as Widdrington and more rural areas such as Longhorsley and Mitford.

The Districts of Wansbeck and Blyth are situated in the South East of the County and are more urban than the other Districts. In the past these two Districts were the industrial engine room of the County, with coalmining, fishing and engineering being prominent. The de-industrialisation of these Districts over the past 25 years has, as the figures below show, led to above average unemployment rates.

The A19, known as the spine road, cuts through this area and gives easy access to the Tyne Tunnel as well as connecting to the A1. A network of B roads also offers easy access to all areas of each District which is mainly urbanised with small areas of green space.

Tynedale is situated in the West of the County and is the biggest District in England. (See below) At its centre is the market town of Hexham which is surrounded by smaller villages, hamlets and very remote areas such as Humshaugh and Blanchland. The landscape is made up of agricultural land, forestry. Keilder Water, the largest man-made reservoir in England, is also located in this area and is a major tourist attraction, together with Hadrian's Wall.

The A69 cuts through the centre of the District which gives access to Cumbria to the West and Newcastle to the East. Other roads are B roads, with a series of small and narrow country lanes. There are train stations in Hexham and Stocksfield which provide commuter links to Carlisle in the West and Newcastle in the East.

The total number of people residing in Northumberland in the 2001 census was 307,190 of whom 149,953 were male and 157,237 were female. Those aged between 0-15 years amounted to 57,905, aged between 16-74 years totalled 224,679 and 24,606 were aged 75 years or over. The population density was 62 people per square kilometre, which is the lowest population density in England. Breaking down the population into the six District Council areas, the urban areas of Blyth and Wansbeck, situated in the South East of the County, have the highest population. Whereas the more rural Districts of Alnwick and Berwick have the lowest population. Tynedale in the West is considered a rural area but has a high population in comparison to Alnwick and Berwick and also surpasses Castle Morpeth situated in the centre of the County. However, Tynedale is the biggest District in England with an area of 2,219 square kilometres; thus explaining the high population, but also gives an indication of the remoteness of many places within its borders.

In all six Districts the total number of females is higher the total number of males, with the highest population of both genders situated in the urban South East areas of

Blyth and Wansbeck. The lowest numbers of either gender are located in the rural North Districts of Alnwick and Berwick.

The ethnic make up of Northumberland is predominantly white (99.3%). Figures for the districts vary from 98.1% to 99.6%, and residents identify themselves as Christian, with numbers varying between 79% and 82.6%. Other religious groupings included Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh; although not all groupings are represented in all Districts. Overall the BME population in Northumberland was 0.985% compared with an average of 9.1% in England and Wales. The average for England and Wales who identified themselves as white was 91.3% and an average of 71.7% residents identifying themselves as Christian.

The employment of those between 16 -74 years of age is evenly spread across the County, although the more urban areas of the County have the lowest rates of employment in this age group. Moreover, these areas also have the highest unemployment and also those who are long term unemployed. This pattern is also replicated in the figures for those who are permanently sick or disabled. The most rural district of the County, Tynedale, had the most people in employment.

	Northumberland	Alnwick	Berwick	Blyth Valley	Castle Morpeth	Tynedale	Wansbeck
Population	307190	31029	25949	81265	49001	58808	61138
Male	149953	15052	12470	39570	24357	28641	29863
Female	157237	15977	13479	41695	24644	30167	31275
Ethnicity (White)	99.03 %	99.6 %	99.6 %	99 %	98.1 %	99.3 %	99 %
Religion (Christian)	81 %	82.6 %	82.4 %	79.5 %	81.2 %	80.8 %	81.9 %
Employed (Aged 16-74 years)	59 %	59.9 %	59.5 %	59.5 %	56.9 %	63 %	55.8 %
Unemployed (Aged 16-74 years)	3.8 %	3.7 %	3.6 %	4.4 %	2.8 %	2.8 %	4.8 %
Long Term Unemployed (Aged 16-74)	1.2 %	1.2 %	1 %	1.3 %	1 %	1 %	1.7 %

years)							
Permanently sick or disabled (Aged 16-74 years)	7 %	5.2 %	5.8 %	8.5 %	6 %	4.8 %	9.7 %

Box 4.0 Northumberland Population Breakdown – gender, religion, employment status, sick and disabled. Source Census 2001

There are also similarities with the figures on how people travel to work. One interesting issue to arise from the statistics is that those living in the more urban areas of Blyth, Castle Morpeth and Wansbeck, used the car more than their rural counterparts, even though public transport is more accessible in the urban areas. In all six Districts the number of commuters using public transport fell below the average for England and Wales which stood at 14.5%. The statistical figures for the more rural area of Tynedale in the West and Alnwick in the North reflected the possible shortage of public transport in the more outlying areas of these Districts. There is also a split between rural/urban when examining the statistics for those residents with qualifications of degree level or higher and those with no qualifications.

Wansbeck and Blyth have above average rate when compared with the average for England and Wales of 29.1%. Of those with no qualifications these areas also have lower percentages of those with qualifications at degree level or higher. Alnwick, Castle Morpeth and Tynedale have higher than average of those with qualifications at degree level or higher. With housing the trend is different for the number of owner occupiers in each District. The three most urban areas, Blyth Valley, Castle Morpeth and Wansbeck all had more owner occupiers than the more rural districts of Alnwick and Berwick in the North. However, other than Castle Morpeth, Tynedale in the rural West had the highest amount of owner occupiers.



Box 4.1 Map of Northumberland

In terms of the provision of services for victims of domestic violence, the only women's refuge in Northumberland is situated in the South East of the County. This means that, for those living in Berwick in the North it would be a journey of approximately fifty miles to the refuge, and for those living in the more outlying areas of the district it could be up to ten miles more. For those living in Tynedale in the West of the County the refuge would be approximately sixty miles away, and, again, a further ten to fifteen miles for those living in the more extreme rural areas. In practical terms, the refuge situated in Newcastle would, in all probability, be easier to access than the one in the South East of Northumberland. Moreover, with Edinburgh approximately 50 miles away from the northern town of Berwick, resources in

Scotland could potentially be more accessible for victims. The two part-time services for victims of domestic violence were situated at Wooler, a remote village situated in the North, and Hexham a market town in the West.

The knock-on effect is that countywide agency representatives, who were mainly based in the South East of the county, needed to travel these significant distances to attend Forum meetings in the West and North. Moreover, those agency representatives working in the West and North faced the same problem of travel distance and time when attending meetings or events in the South East. This reflects the rurality of the county and the major impact it has on the daily routines and functions of agency representatives and service providers.

There are police stations in all six Districts; however not all stations are open twenty four hours a day. Therefore, if the police station in the West was closed officers would have to travel up to fifty miles to the nearest station situated in the South East if they wished to hold a perpetrator overnight. There was also potential for a further complication if no cells were available at that station. The main offences recorded for Northumberland between April 2009 and March 2011 were violence against the person, other wounding and criminal damage. The number of offences of violence against the person peaked between April 2006 and March 2007, other wounding peaked between April 2003 and March 2004, whereas criminal damage peaked between April 2002 and March 2003. District data shows the same offences as being the main concern. However, these are higher in the urban areas of Blyth Valley, Castle Morpeth and Wansbeck situated in the South East of the County. Moreover, these areas have a greater amount of public houses, takeaways etc and have active night life especially Morpeth town centre.

At the time of the research the local government structure was a two-tier authority which consisted of six District Councils and a County Council. Two Districts covered the North of the County, two the South East and one the West. The County Council was based centrally in the market town of Morpeth, and had been since the restructuring of local government in 1974. Further restructuring took place during the research with the County becoming a unitary authority in 2009. Nevertheless, as a

two-tier authority the County Council were in charge of services such as Children and Social Services, whilst the Districts took care of other services, such as refuse collection, Housing and council tax collection.

The political landscape of the county before becoming a unitary authority reflected the geographical make up of Northumberland. At the last local elections in 2003 before Northumberland became a unitary authority the political landscape consisted of three District Councils where a single party had an overall majority. These were Wansbeck and Blyth Valley situated in the South East of the County and were Labour controlled, and Tynedale in the rural West which was Conservative controlled. In the North both Berwick and Alnwick elected councils where no one single party had overall control. Seats were divided between the three main political parties and Independent councillors. The only change in the North at the 2003 local elections was that the Liberal Democrats lost overall control of Berwick. Castle Morpeth also elected a council where no one party had overall control. Seats were divided between the three main political parties, Independent councillors and one Green representative. The County Council at this time was Labour controlled.

Elections for the new unitary authority in 2008 saw an unexpected shift in power. Although no party gained overall control the Liberal Democrats gained most seats. It had been expected that Labour would be the main party but their losses were turned into gains for the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives. Subsequently the make up of the Council saw the Liberal Democrats with twenty five seats, Labour and the Conservatives with seventeen seats each, and others eight.

The political landscape, to some extent, represents the differences between the rural and the more urbanised areas of the County. The West which contains some of the most rural areas is Conservative controlled, whereas in the more urbanised areas such as Wansbeck and Blyth Valley are Labour controlled. The Index of Multiple Deprivation shows the most deprived areas in Northumberland are Blyth Valley and Wansbeck, although there small pockets in other areas such as Haltwhistle in the West, and Alnwick, Amble and Berwick in the North. This split tends, to some extent, reflect the national picture where the more rural and shire areas return

Conservative MP's and the most deprived areas return Labour MP's.

The census data also shows other differences between the rural and urban areas of Northumberland. The deprived areas of the South East of the County have the highest percentage of long term unemployed and those permanently sick or disabled. These areas also have the highest recorded crime figures for violence against the person and other wounding and criminal damage. The data also gives an insight into the difficulties victims may face attempting to access services; for example lack of public transport, distance and time taken by rural residents to access service in the more urban parts of the County. Moreover, issues of distance and time are also a consideration for practitioners wishing to attend meetings or visit clients in the rural parts of Northumberland.

This section has given a detailed overview of the socio-political map of Northumberland; thus enabling a better understanding of the geographical landscape of the County. It also complements the classification of rural, which in turn, allows the findings of the research to be contextualised and understood and how they relate to the different Districts.

Methodology and Methods

Triangulation

The reason for using a triangulation of methods was it would allow data to be collected by different methods (Alexander et al 2008, Kelle 2001, Noaks and Wincup 2004). A thorough analysis of the different aspects of the data could be undertaken, and more importantly overcome any shortcomings arising from using a single method of research (Burgess 1984, Flick 2006). The triangulation of methods allowed the opportunity to balance the weakness and strengths of the different methods (Bachman and Schutt 2007, Jupp, Davies and Francis 2000)

Semi-Structured Interviews

The primary source of data was semi-structured interviews which allowed the opportunity to capture more in-depth information; giving more depth to the reasoning and meaning behind developments and actions (Jupp 1995). The benefit of semi-structured interviews was that it allowed me to ‘vary the sequence of questions’ if I so wished and allowed me to make minor adjustments where necessary (Bailey 2007, Gray 2009). This gave me the opportunity to probe if points of interest were raised which is in contrast to the structured interview which is more rigid and does not allow the flexibility of the semi-structured interview (Bryman 2001, Fielding and Thomas 2008, Hessler 1992).

Before embarking on the interview process I developed a framework of questioning both for stakeholders and victims. The questions focused on four different topic areas. These were; rurality, agencies responses/service provision, criminal justice responses and women’s experiences. I felt these topic areas would elicit comprehensive and relevant data whilst meeting the research aims and objectives. The questions were assembled in an order that allowed the interview process to flow naturally into the various themes, and not encourage the interviewee to drift into areas which were not of concern; thus keeping repetition to a minimum. I also had a number of prompts and supplementary questions to refer to depending on the answer an interviewee gave to a specific question. One example of this was with regards rurality; one of the supplementary questions was; ‘what consequences does rurality have on women’s experiences of domestic violence?’ Prompts varied, depending on the response and would include ‘would you like to say a little more?’ or ‘could you expand on that point?’ The prompts remained the same for all interviews with follow up questions dependent on answers given (Crow and Semmons 2008, Wilson and Sapsford 2008). When undertaking interviews with Public Protection Unit (PPU) officers in strategic positions the focus of the questions changed to reflect their position within the PPU. For example, the three main themes of the interview covered organisational partnership working, the setting up of the PPU and involvement in the local Domestic Violence Strategy.

Consent and Managing Bias

Consideration also needed to be given to formal consent which is seen as the ‘linchpin of ethical behaviour.’ Once individuals had given their consent to be interviewed and participate in the research, there was a mutual agreement that the interviewee was free to take part and could refuse to continue the interview at anytime they wished. At no time did I apply any pressure for the interviewee to comply (Allmark 2002, Flick 2006, Hessler 1992, Noaks and Wincup 2004). Moreover, respondents were informed as to the nature of the research; that the information they provided would be treated in the strictest confidence and they would remain anonymous when any quotation of theirs was used (Bachman and Schutt 2007, Bulmer 2008, Homan 1991, Katz 1972, Noaks and Wincup 2004, Sarantakos 2005). The preamble to all my interviews set out clearly the aims and objectives of the research and, due to the topic, emphasis was heavily placed on the issue of confidentiality and anonymity. All those interviewed were happy with this process and written consent was not required.

As the interviewer I carried identification and always explained the aims and objectives of the research verbally. The priority was to ensure that the individual felt that their contribution was valuable and that their responses would be treated with the strictest confidence (Bulmer 2008, Crow and Semmens 2008, Simmons 2001). As the interviewer, I aimed to be relaxed and not condescending nor deferential, displaying interest without appearing intrusive and also striking up a friendly rapport with the interviewee (Jones 2004, Singer et al 1983, Wilson and Sapsford 2008). Hessler (1992, 142) suggests that ‘the completeness and accuracy of information that the interviewer and respondent have about each other going into the interview is a very important predictor of rapport’. Body language is another important factor when interviewing; whilst I may not have agreed with the interviewee I conveyed on-going support throughout, whether that was by nodding my head or through eye contact. Moreover, at times I needed to get the interviewee to summarise the information they had told me so that any misunderstanding could be cleared up (Ibid, see also Bulmer 2008). Finally, care was taken that interviewees were not heavily influenced by myself in an effort to elicit the answers to my questions which reflected the outcome I desired.

To tackle this 'interviewer bias' Merton and Kendal (1946, 555) maintain that;

- i) Guidance and direction from the interviewer should be at a minimum
- ii) The subject's definition of the situation should find full and specific expression
- iii) The interview should bring out the value-laden implications of the response

Reflecting on the three points made by Merton and Kendal (1946), I initially found the first, regarding minimum guidelines and direction, difficult. For example, some points raised by the interviewee would make me inclined to start discussing and debating the finer points of their narrative. However, after a few attempts I became disciplined in resisting this temptation and used my prompts to facilitate a more in-depth interview. This links with the third point made by Merton and Kendal (1946) that prompting and cajoling would draw out of the interviewee their values and concerns, allowing them the opportunity to fully express themselves on specific issues. This had important implications for this research and the analysis of the overall response to domestic violence in rural Northumberland.

Gatekeeping

Before undertaking pilot interviews I needed to be fully aware of the organisations and individuals who would assist in this process. Gaining access to data and individuals for interview was a fundamental necessity for the success of the research. Just as important was having knowledge of who the individuals were, who held the data, and how they could be contacted. These individuals, or gatekeepers, would assist in identifying potential interviewees (Neuman 2006, Noaks and Wincup 2004).

There was, in some cases, no need to identify gatekeepers for some interviewees, as I had a wide network of work contacts. In these situations, requests for interviews came about either by a conversation or contact via a telephone call. Nevertheless, the

identification of gatekeepers was an on-going process and reviewed regularly. Indeed, some individuals I had interviewed were helpful in identifying stakeholders who could be approached for interview or identifying someone within their organisation for interview (Hughes 2000). In order to gain access to the local women's refuge I obtained contact details for the refuge manager via my network, who I subsequently contacted and put forward my proposal for interviews with victims.

For access to data such as minutes of meetings, strategies etc., I had collated a number of these documents due to my attendance at meetings. I also received relevant data from associates. However, although my request for data from the Community Safety Officer (who I had interviewed) had been verbally agreed, the data was not forthcoming, despite further prompts and reminders. This leads into an important aspect of the process. Whilst being able to identify 'gatekeepers' was important, of equal importance was being aware of possible difficulties, one notably being 'frozen out' (Neuman 2006) and requests being ignored for various reasons. Certainly there were instances, when requesting interviews, when I was 'frozen out' (Jupp, Davies, and Francis 2000). The Community Safety Co-ordinator, who had previously indicated a willingness to be interviewed, withdrew from this verbal arrangement due to an unrelated disagreement on a work issue.

Pilot Interviews

The first stage of this process was to identify organisations, both statutory and voluntary, and individuals within them, who could be interviewed. An initial list of twelve names was drawn up. These were individuals who I felt had historical, as well as present day, knowledge on the development of domestic violence policy within rural Northumberland over the previous five to six years. How the research developed determined whether all on the list would agree to be interviewed, and others were added following conversations with interviewees or developments in the field. However, from the original list I identified a small sample for pilot interviews (Simmons 2001). Therefore, I contacted two individuals from my original list, via telephone, outlining my research and requesting an interview. The list was compiled

after identifying key stakeholders who I felt it a requirement to interview. Both individuals were happy to be interviewed at their place of work, and a date and time were set which was convenient to both parties.

The purpose of undertaking pilot interviews was to give me the opportunity to test the questions to see whether or not I was extracting, from the small sample of the identified population, information that was relevant to my research. This process assisted in re-drafting and formulating the questions so they reflected the aims and objectives of the research (Fielding and Thomas 2008, Wilson and Sapsford 2008). The data collected from these interviews was used in the final analysis therefore individuals did not need to be re-interviewed. The purpose of the pilot interview was an opportunity to collate information about the research subject before settling on a more structured approach (Fielding and Thomas 2008). However, the main purpose of the pilot interviews was for me to obtain a clear understanding as to whether;

- 1) The respondents understood the questions they were being asked
- 2) The respondents were able to offer varied responses to the questions asked or if a number of specific prompts were needed
- 3) The interview schedule took too long
- 4) The best order for questions had been determined (Adapted from Wilson and Sapsford 2008)

Although the pilot interviews were successful in gathering relevant information and reflected the aims and objectives of the research, I felt that due to the sequence of the questions there was a lot of repetition as the interview progressed. The pilot interviews also proved a useful exercise for myself, allowing me to gain invaluable experience in interviewing techniques; for example, not allowing the interviewee to drift into areas which were not related to my topic of research. The answers respondents gave to some questions allowed me to develop more prompts that I would use in future interviews. To address the issue of repetition, I decided that it would be more beneficial if the questions were re-drafted and broken down into sections with four or five questions in each section, along with a number of prompts. The sections once again reflected the main areas of study which were; rurality, agencies responses,

other organisations, criminal justice responses and women's experiences. By setting out the questions in this way, I could move naturally into the different areas, not having to repeat questions, or refer back to previous statements/answers. The pilot interviews also allowed me to critically analyse and reconsider the sequencing of questions and to study the data from these interviews to assess whether my questioning was eliciting relevant data.

Pilot Interviews

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. Before I start can I just explain what my thesis is about and what I hope to achieve from it. The main focus of the research is to explore the nature of, and responses to, domestic violence in rural Northumberland. In particular, the study will be an exploration of the impact rurality has on victims, an examination of their needs and experiences in relation to the provision of services including the criminal justice system, along with community and voluntary agencies.

With your agreement the interview will be tape recorded and transcribed at a later date. The contents of the interview will be treated in strictest confidence and you have the right to end the interview at any time you wish. Moreover, if you do not wish to answer any question you are under no obligation to do so. If you are happy with the arrangements then I'll begin.

Before I begin could you say a few words about you, your role and your organisation?

What services are currently available to victims of domestic violence within Northumberland?

Do you think victims are aware of the different services?

If not why?

Given that service provision can always be improved, how and where, do you think service provision can be improved for victims throughout the County?

Funding/long term planning/barriers

How do you feel the rurality of Northumberland impacts on women's experiences of domestic violence?

What do you understand by rural?

Examples of parts of Northumberland

How does rurality impact on service provision?

What do you think service providers understand by the term domestic violence?

Is it a personal issue? People shouldn't interfere/public/private violence

What in your opinion are the barriers restricting women from reporting domestic violence?

Police response/further violence/don't see it as abuse/financial/lack of services

Box 4.2 Pilot Interview Questions

Stakeholder Interviews

On reflection, the first group of interviews were successful in drawing from the interviewee's relevant information. If an interviewee raised an issue that I was unaware of, I developed this further in my next interview as I felt it would enhance the interview. With the questions for the interview being divided into relevant sections, this allowed the interviews to flow and keep repetition to a minimum.

Questions for Interviews

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. Before I start can I just explain what my thesis is about and what I hope to achieve from it. The main focus of the research is to explore the nature of, and responses to, domestic violence in rural Northumberland. In particular, the study will be an exploration of the impact rurality has on victims, an examination of their needs and experiences in relation to the provision of services including the criminal justice system, along with community and voluntary agencies. To reflect these areas the questions are broken down into four categories with three or four questions in each section. The categories are; rurality, organisations/agencies responses, criminal justice responses and women's experiences.

With your agreement the interview will be tape recorded and transcribed at a later date. The contents of the interview will be treated in strictest confidence and you have the right to end the interview at any time you wish. Moreover, if you do not wish to answer any question you are under no obligation to do so. If you are happy with the arrangements then I'll begin.

Before I begin could you say a few words about you, your role and your organisation?

Rurality

How would you make a distinction between rural and urban within Northumberland?

Do you think the role of women in rural Northumberland differs from that of women in an inner city area?

Do you think that domestic violence is a problem in rural Northumberland?

Why do you think that is?

What consequences does rurality have on women's experiences of domestic abuse?

(Maybe better if stayed in experiences section as it might lead to a wider discussion on women's experiences. Or link to third question in experiences section)

Organisation/Agencies Responses/Service Provision

Does your organisation/agency have a working definition of domestic violence?

(How) does your organisation/agency become involved with domestic violence issues?

What method of recording/screening does your organisation/agency have for domestic violence incidents?

Were you or your organisation consulted or involved in the development of the Northumberland strategy? If not why do you think this was? If so can you explain brief what your or your organisations role was?

Are you a member of the Northumberland Domestic Violence Steering Group?

Have you been actively involved in the strategy sub-groups?

Other Organisations/Agencies

Can you name other organisations/agencies involved with domestic violence in rural Northumberland?

Are you involved in the Forums? Has it helped? If not why not? Do you think they have a positive role to play?

Have the Forums a strategic overview of domestic violence in your district/County?

What input did the Forums have in the development of the Northumberland strategy?

Does your organisation/agency work in partnership with other organisations/agencies on domestic violence issues? If so, in what way is this achieved? What are the benefits? What are the pitfalls? If not why?

Does rurality have an impact on partnership working? If so how? If not why?

Criminal Justice Responses

Do you think the police response to domestic violence in rural Northumberland is adequate?

Do you think the police have/or have had too much control with regards the development and delivery of the Northumberland strategy? If so why to you think this is?

Does rurality effect/impact on the type of response the police offer?

Do you think the CPS have a role to play with regard to domestic violence? If so what is it? If not, why do you think they don't?

Do you think magistrates' responses towards domestic violence cases are adequate?

Should the Sentencing Advisory Panel issue guidance to courts dealing with domestic violence cases? (May leave out)

Do you think the police/courts should inform the victim of how the perpetrator is being dealt with?

Women's Experiences

In your experience, are victims aware of what services are available to them?

Does access to these services impact on the experiences of victims?

In your opinion what barriers are there to women reporting domestic violence in rural Northumberland?

How do you think service provision for victims in rural Northumberland could be improved?

Do you think victims should have been consulted during the development of the Northumberland strategy? If so why? If not why?

Are you aware if victims were consulted in the development of the Northumberland Strategy?

Box 4.3 Preamble and Questions for Stakeholder Interviews

The interview schedule was consistently revised due to commitments of work or developments in the field. After completing the first five interviews I consulted my original list and started to contact a further five possible interviewees. These five, who were known to me through work, were contacted in person, via conversations at meetings or work related events. I felt that five was a manageable number and would fit in with my working commitments.

At this time, the setting up of the Public Protection Unit (PPU) by the police meant that I revised the names of officers I wished to interview. A PPU officer, who I had interviewed earlier, provided details of two colleagues whom she felt would wish to participate in my research. I wrote to these officers requesting an interview; however I received no response from either. To surmount this I wrote to the Chief Superintendent to request interviews with PPU officers to gather information on the strategic response to domestic violence in the County. A few weeks later I received a telephone call from the Deputy Chief Superintendent saying that my letter had been passed to him to follow up. He explained that he would arrange for an officer to contact me on their return from leave who would be happy to be interviewed. A week later I was contacted by an Inspector saying she was willing to be interviewed, but was going on a six week training course and if I contacted her on her return, a date would be set for an interview which was suitable to us both. I felt that it was important to secure interviews with PPU personnel who were involved at a strategic level in order to ascertain, at first hand, what the strategic priorities of the PPU were and how they envisaged them being implemented.

A year after the PPU was established, funding was found to employ a Domestic Violence Co-ordinator to work within the unit at a strategic level. After an informal chat at a seminar on domestic violence the newly appointed co-ordinator agreed to be interviewed.

Dear

I am currently studying for a PhD at the University of Northumbria. The topic of my thesis is victims' experiences of domestic violence in rural Northumberland, whilst also focusing on the strategic response to domestic violence throughout the County. My research has included undertaking interviews with both statutory and voluntary agencies throughout Northumberland. I have interviewed police officers within Northumberland Area Command, but am now focusing on Northumbria Police's strategic response to domestic violence.

Therefore, would it be possible to interview yourself, or someone within your organisation who could give an account of the Force's strategic response to domestic violence within the North East region?

If you wish to verify that I am undertaking research in this area, please do not hesitate to contact Peter Francis (Principal Lecturer in Criminology) University of Northumbria on 0191 2273599.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Box 4.4 Letter to PPU Officers and Chief Superintendent

My contact with the women's refuge allowed me to gain access and interview the manager and outreach worker. A further three stakeholders were also identified and contacted either by telephone, or in person, and I received a positive response from all three. Interviews were subsequently conducted at convenient dates, times and places.

After discussions with my tutor on the interview process, it became evident that a primary source was required to provide a historical context on policy development etc. Those who had been interviewed were knowledgeable about the present and future initiatives, however, most were either newly appointed or not familiar with past domestic violence initiatives. The person I identified to fill this gap in my research had not been on my original list for interview. He had, during the course of my research, been transferred to work outside Northumberland. He was employed by Northumbria Police, could provide some background history and was instrumental in setting up the Northumberland Domestic Violence Project (NDVP). This complemented the documentary analysis of that period. The officer was contacted via e-mail requesting an interview. A positive response was received and an interview

took place at the officer's local police station. The interview was informative and painted a picture of earlier policy and strategic developments.

Exploring the historical angle further, I came up with names of two more individuals who, I felt, would provide further knowledge on the historical aspect of policy development on domestic violence in rural Northumberland. The first person, who I had worked with during my early years as a Drug Development Worker, had not worked in Northumberland for almost three years. I and former colleagues had no contact details for this person.

The second person who I felt could also assist with the historical context also no longer worked in Northumberland. However, whilst having a discussion with the Newcastle Domestic Violence Co-ordinator this person's name came up in conversation. The Co-ordinator knew the person was employed at a refuge in the Tyneside area and gave me contact details. When I contacted the refuge I was told that the person no longer worked there and they did not feel it appropriate to provide their contact details. Nevertheless, approximately eight months later I attended a meeting at which this person was also in attendance. After the meeting I approached the person, who I was already acquainted with, and discussed the possibility of an interview which would focus on her time as an employee with Northumberland Women's Aid. A date and time for the interview was then agreed and the interview took place a few weeks later.

Women's Aid Questions

Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. Before I start can I just explain what my thesis is about and what I hope to achieve from it. The main focus of the research is to explore the nature of, and responses to, domestic violence in rural Northumberland. In particular, the study will be an exploration of the impact rurality has on victims, together with an examination of their needs and experiences in relation to the provision of services including the criminal justice system, along with community and voluntary agencies. It will also incorporate the development of a strategic response to domestic violence across rural Northumberland. For the purposes of this interview I would like to concentrate on your time employed by Women's Aid; particularly focusing on the structure and service provision, partnership working and the eventual demise of Women's Aid across

Northumberland and your views as to this eventuality.

With your agreement the interview will be tape recorded and transcribed at a later date. The contents of the interview will be treated in strictest confidence and you have the right to end the interview at any time you wish. Moreover, if you do not wish to answer any question you are under no obligation to do so. If you are happy with the arrangements then I'll begin.

Structure and service provision:

When did you become involved with Women's Aid?

What was the structure? For example, how many involved?

Did you cover the whole of Northumberland?

What services did they offer?

Did the rural nature of Northumberland present any difficulties in terms of offering a service?

Was the Refuge provision staffed 24 hours?

Were the residents in the refuge all from Northumberland? If so which parts? If not what areas did they come from?

Partnership working:

Were you or any other member of staff involved in the Domestic Violence Forums? If so which ones? If not why?

Did you work in partnership with other agencies? For example Victim Support, Police, Probation, Local Authorities. What were the benefits of this? What were the pitfalls?

Was Women's Aid involved with the setting up of the Northumberland Domestic Violence Project (NDVP) at any stage? If so, could you explain what that role was, and the outcome of your work? If not why not?

Demise:

Could you explain the reasons as to why Women's Aid folded in Northumberland?

Could you say what could have been done differently to enable Women's Aid to still be operating in Northumberland?

Is there anything else you wish to add?

Reflections on Stakeholder Interviews

The first five interviews were conducted with questions divided into sections and were more focused and less repetitive than the previous pilot interviews. However, there were still some areas which I was not entirely happy with. The section on rurality, and particularly, the question asking interviewees to make a distinction between rural and urban within Northumberland, was an initial cause for concern. The first few interviewees tended to focus upon the area in which they worked rather than look at the whole of Northumberland. When prompted to comment on rural and urban in a Northumberland context they were still reluctant to express a view, arguing they were not overly familiar with the geographical nature of the county. In their defence this may have been due to them only working in Northumberland for a short period of time. In future interviews I included more prompts if I was faced with a similar situation. For example, I would mention well known places in other parts of the county and ask if they made a distinction between urban and rural, and if so what it was. This process proved to be more rewarding in terms of teasing out information from the interviewee.

As I completed more interviews, I felt my skills as an interviewer improved, allowing me to prompt and cajole responses from interviewees. However, I still had some apprehension when interviewing those who I worked with closely, which stemmed from my familiarity with the individual and concerns that they were being reserved in their answers due to their working relationship with me.

Of all the interviews conducted I felt there was probably two or three that were not as fruitful as I had anticipated. One interview, where I felt I would gain first hand knowledge of women's experiences, was not as productive as envisaged. This may have been due to my interview technique, but I felt I had used a number of prompts to try and solicit relevant information. However, with one word or short sentence answers, I didn't have great success.

This was a similar scenario to another interview I carried out with a person who was influential at a strategic level. Whilst some of the interview was helpful I felt, rightly

or wrongly, that the person seemed somewhat reluctant to discuss issues in-depth. Whether this was due to the fact that the person was someone I came across occasionally in my everyday work, I could not say. However, on reflection it would be interesting to know if the interview would have taken the same course if I had previously been unknown to the person. Overall, the vast majority of interviews were successful in gaining information related to my research aims and objectives, and contributed a vast amount of relevant data.

After undertaking fifteen interviews with stakeholders, I critically evaluated the content of the interviews, reviewing the list of stakeholders who had been interviewed and the organisations they represented. From this process I identified additional stakeholders to interview who I felt would provide relevant information from a strategic, policy or operational level and represented the Strategic Group, the PPU and GONE. Once the list was completed I started to contact the stakeholders identified.

The final set of interviews was insightful. Representatives from the strategic group and GONE shed light on the problems associated with the implementation of the strategic action plan, in terms of personality and politics. The representative from GONE acknowledged that mistakes had been made, but felt that lessons had been learned. Moreover, the interviews with the strategic police officers also provided a better understanding of their strategic priorities and how these were implemented at an operational level. Overall, I felt these interviews complemented the previous ones and would benefit the research in terms of meeting the objectives.

Organisation and Gender	Date and Location of Interview
1. Northumberland Domestic Violence Project Manager – Female	10 March 2004 – NDVP Offices Ashington Police Station
2. Housing Officer Castle Morpeth - Female	21 June 2004 – Castle Morpeth Council Offices Morpeth
3. 608030 Manager - Female	29 June 2004 – Managers Office Hexham
4. Public Protection Unit Officer - Female	11 March 2005 – Bedlington Police

	Station
5. Probation Service Officer - Female	29 March 2005 – Blyth Probation Offices
6. Author of Local Research - Female	19 April 2004 – County Hall Morpeth
7. Victim Support Manager - Female	8 April 2005 – Victim Support Office Bedlington
8. CEASE 24 Manager - Female	14 April 2005 – Citizens Advice Office Alnwick
9. Refuge Outreach Worker - Female	24 August 2005 – Refuge Bedlington
10. Refuge Worker - Female	20 October 2005 – Refuge Bedlington
11. Tynedale Domestic Violence Forum Chair - Female	31 August 2005 – Tynedale Council Offices Hexham
12. Community Safety Officer - Male	20 January 2006 – Berwick upon Tweed Council Offices Berwick
13. South East Domestic Violence Forum Chair - Male	31 January 2006 – Wansbeck Council Offices Bedlington
14. Police Officer (Former LALO Officer N/Land - Historical Context) - Male	25 May 2006 – Two Ball Lonnen Police Station Newcastle
15. PPU Domestic Violence Co-ordinator - Female	21 June 2006 – Bedlington Police Station
16. PPU Lead Officer - Male	25 May 2007 – Police Headquarters Ponteland
17. Housing Officer Tynedale - Male	11 October 2006 – Tynedale Council Offices Hexham
18. Travellers Rep - Male	31 October 2006 – Drop in Centre Lynemouth
19. WHAC Worker - Female	1 November 2006 – WHAC Offices Ashington
20. GONE – Domestic Violence Lead -	28 November 2006 – GONE Offices

Female	Newcastle
21. Police Regional – PPU - Female	22 June 2007 – Police Headquarters Ponteland
22. Probation – Chief Officer - Female	27 March 2007 – Probation Offices Newcastle
23. Former Women’s Aid Worker - Female	21 February 2007 – Alnwick Gardens Alnwick
24. Strategic Group Member - Female	3 May 2007 – Members Office Morpeth

Box 4.6 Interview chart detailing the organisations stakeholders were employed by, gender, dates and location of interviews.

Interviews with Victims

Whilst interviewing stakeholders, I also took the opportunity to enquire about gaining access to victims for interview. This process entailed identifying a sample of victims and possible times and locations for access. At that particular time there was a group who met in Hexham every Tuesday, facilitated by Women’s Aid. I had already met with the staff during my work as a Drug Development Worker and had good working relationships with them. The membership of the group fluctuated week by week, however, and at any one time there could be up to eight to ten women present. I decided to make initial enquiries to see if I could interview the women on a one-to-one basis or in small focus groups at a later date during my research. These initial discussions received a favourable response.

The other source I identified was the refuge which is situated in the South East of the County. During this time plans were afoot to build a new refuge in the same area but different location, which would mean more accommodation for victims of domestic violence. Whilst waiting for the completion of the refuge I made enquiries with stakeholders to find out who I needed to speak with regards gaining access to victims in the new refuge. From these two identified sources, it was felt at the time that it would be possible to undertake the required amount of interviews with victims.

The women’s group which met at Hexham at the outset seemed to be the main opportunity for gaining access. However, unforeseen circumstances closed this

avenue. Northumberland Women's Aid, after internal difficulties and a high profile court case, ceased to exist in Northumberland. The money which funded the Hexham project was then used to set up a new organisation to carry on the work and support which Women's Aid had provided. The new organisation was called 608030 - which was the telephone number of the organisation - and a new co-ordinator was appointed. Whilst the existing women's group continued initially, it folded after a short period of time mainly due to lack of resources. It was hoped that the group would reconvene at some stage in the future; however, this did not materialise.

With Women's Aid no longer working in Northumberland this meant that there was potentially no one to run the newly built refuge situated in the South East of the county. This problem was eventually solved when Cheviot Housing took over the running of the refuge. In early 2005 I contacted the refuge requesting an informal meeting with the refuge manager to discuss the possibility of gaining access to women to interview. I received a reply inviting me for an informal chat with the manager to discuss my research and the intended interview process. This informal meeting also gave me the opportunity to request an interview with the manager and the outreach worker. All along I was acutely aware that care needed to be taken when interviewing vulnerable groups. I also considered any possible harm which the women may have faced if they were 'identifiable as a result of being interviewed on tape', or that they may have felt threatened by the process of being interviewed on tape (Beck 1999, Fielding and Thomas 2001, Noaks and Wincup 2004), or the risk of developing 'long-term psychological distress' due to the interviews and having to relive stressful experiences (Renzetti and Lee 1993, Sieber 2009). From this meeting the manager consulted with staff to set up an informal meeting with the women exploring possibilities for interviews. I provided a short précis of the research which was handed to the women prior to the meeting.

The main focus of my research is to explore the nature of, and responses to, domestic violence in rural Northumberland. In particular, the study will be an exploration of the impact rurality has on sufferers of domestic violence, and an examination of their needs and experiences in relation to the provision of services including the criminal justice system along with community and voluntary agencies.

I am aware of the concerns surrounding domestic violence and how recalling your experiences may cause distress. However, if you agree to be interviewed the interview will focus on the journey you undertook from first experiencing domestic violence to ending up here at the refuge. Specifically, I would like to focus on your early experiences, and whether you decided to stay at first, and if so who did you seek help from? Right up until you finally decided to leave? And why you decided to leave? I would also like to explore your experience of services; the impact rurality played with regard these experiences and whether your experience may have been different if you had lived in an urban/rural area? Finally, I wish to undertake an analysis of the services you came into contact with exploring the positive and negative aspects you experienced, and what areas you would like to see improved.

Box 4.7 Short Précis for Residents of the Refuge

From the meeting three women agreed to be interviewed and the refuge agreed to provide a counselling service for those women who required a one-to-one session after being interviewed. Dates and times were arranged for when the interviews would take place. All three women said they were happy to be interviewed by myself at the refuge; they were offered the opportunity for a member of staff to be present during the interview. All three declined.

Questions for Victims Interviews

Pre-ambles

As you are aware the main focus of my research is to explore the nature of, and responses to, domestic violence in rural Northumberland. In particular, the study will be an exploration of the impact rurality has on sufferers of domestic violence, and an examination of their needs and experiences in relation to the provision of services including the criminal justice system along with community and voluntary agencies.

I am aware of the concerns surrounding domestic violence and how recalling your experiences may cause distress. However, if you wish not to answer any question you are under no obligation to do so, and if you wish you have the right to end the interview at anytime. With your agreement the interview will be tape recorded and transcribed at a later date. The contents of the interview will be treated in the strictest

confidence. Once the interview is transcribed I will make an appointment to see you again so we can discuss the contents of the interview for accuracy. Furthermore, I will continue to keep you informed of developments as the research progresses.

The interview will focus on the journey you undertook from first experiencing domestic violence to ending up here at the refuge. Specifically, I would like to focus on your early experiences and whether you decided to stay at first, and if so who did you seek help from? Right up until you finally decided to leave? And why you decided to leave? I would also like to explore your experience of services, the impact rurality played with regard to these experiences and whether your experience may have been different if you had lived in an urban/rural area? Finally, I wish to undertake an analysis of the services you came into contact with, exploring the positive and negative aspects you experienced and what areas you would like to see improved.

If you are happy with the arrangements then I'll begin.

For the purposes of the interview could you tell me the area you lived before you came to the refuge?

Box 4.8 Preamble and Questions for Victims Interviews

At this stage in the research, the potential difficulty I faced was one of securing interviews with victims. Of the proposed ten interviews from two different sources, I had completed two. Moreover, the two interviews undertaken were with women who had fled violence from the Tyneside area and had little experience of services within the Northumberland area. Therefore, I considered what options I had for accessing victims outside of Northumberland. I subsequently contacted and met with the Domestic Violence Co-ordinator at Newcastle City Council. One of the outcomes of this meeting was that I was given contact details for the Newcastle Refuge. I also wrote a letter to the Victim Support Co-ordinator in Newcastle requesting access to victims for interview. None of these two enquiries elicited a response.

Following an informal discussion with the co-ordinator of Northumberland Victim Support about gaining access to victims via their outreach service and their work with the PPU, I was told that there may be the possibility of one or two interviews.

The same request was made of WHAC and one woman came forward for possible interview. I arranged to meet her at WHAC where I explained the nature of my research and the reasons behind asking her to be interviewed. After a short but thorough discussion she agreed for the interview to proceed.

17 July 2006

Dear

I am currently studying for a PhD at the University of Northumbria. My thesis is on victims' experiences of domestic violence in rural Northumberland. The primary research element of my thesis comprises of interviews with stakeholders and victims of domestic violence. I have more or less completed stakeholder interviews; however, interviews with victims are proving to be a little more difficult. I have undertaken a few interviews at the Refuge in Northumberland. After discussing the possibility of interviewing more women who had suffered from domestic violence with my tutor, it was felt that I would have to contact agencies outside of Northumberland.

With this in mind, would it be possible to meet with you to have an informal chat regarding the possibility of accessing victims through your organization? If this is convenient, could you contact me and we can fix a date and time which is suitable to both of us?

If you wish to check with my tutor that I am currently undertaking a PhD in this subject please contact Peter Francis - Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Northumbria 07787170811.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Box 4.9 Letter to Victim Support Co-ordinator Newcastle

Reflections of Interviews with Victims

The first two interviews took place as arranged. However, the third one had to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances regarding the interviewee. The interviews undertaken with the women were semi-structured and concentrated on their journey from first experiencing domestic violence to ending up at the refuge. This examined the impact rurality had on them, their access to service provision, and examined their needs and experiences in relation to the provision of services, which included the

criminal justice system, community and voluntary agencies. Various prompts were included and used, depending on the direction of the interview. This method was, I felt, the best way to allow the women to describe their experiences.

At the end of each interview with the women, I asked if, once the interviews were transcribed, they would like to be shown a transcript of their interview, to ensure they were happy with the content. Once the transcriptions were completed I contacted the refuge, however, I was informed that one of the women had since left. A member of staff agreed to ask the other woman if she wished to meet to look over the transcript of the interview. I was contacted at a later date and told that the other woman did not wish to examine the transcription and was happy for me to proceed with my research.

The first two interviews I undertook with victims differed in several ways. The first was with an older woman who was very calm and measured when answering the questions and remained focused throughout. The second interview was with a much younger woman who, it transpired, had had a more traumatic time than my first interviewee. The trauma she had encountered, over a period of years, was reflected upon throughout the interview. As the interviewer I found it difficult, at times, to keep the interviewee focused on specific parts of her story, without her digressing into other subjects. On reflection I felt this was in part due to the woman wishing to off load all that had happened to her, and having someone who was prepared to listen. The transcription of this interview was very revealing and gave a detailed account of the difficulties the woman had, and was still experiencing.

The third woman lived at home with her children and gave a detailed account of her experience of domestic violence, together with her experience of the police and other service providers. Throughout the interview the woman remained calm and gave measured and thoughtful responses to the questions being asked of her, even though at times it was clear that recalling events had an emotional impact. At the conclusion of the interview I thanked the woman for her time and made sure she was in a relaxed frame of mind. On reflection I felt this interview was the most productive of the three in terms of agency responses and the impact of rurality on the woman's experience; this is in no way a criticism of the previous two women who were interviewed.

However, because they were both from an urban area the rural element of their experience was not an integral part of their overall story.

Transcribing

All the interviews I undertook were taped recorded with agreement of the interviewee. The interview recordings were transcribed at a later date and the relevant data collated and written up. Whilst conducting semi-structured interviews I was focused on the topic and tried not to allow the interviewee to drift into areas of no concern to the subject matter. This would have made for extra work when transcribing and would mean I had failed to collect relevant data (Babbie 1998). Before transcribing the tape recorded interviews I had to decide whether to write down every thing verbatim, or to be selective when transcribing. The advantages of verbatim transcriptions are that 'all possible analytic uses are allowed for' (Gray 2009). This meant that I would not lose any of the data recorded, which at a later date I may have found important. The negative aspect of this process is that it is 'laborious and time consuming' (Ibid). However, as my sample population was small I decided that it was best to transcribe the full sample population verbatim (Fielding and Thomas 2008). Also once the tape recordings of the interviews had no further use they would be wiped or destroyed (Richards 2009).

The length of the interviews varied and once completed I listened to the recording at the earliest opportunity. This allowed me to make a few notes and also clarify some points within the interview (Fielding and Thomas 2008, Gray 2009). Once I had completed this process interviews were then transcribed. At first I decided to transcribe the interviews myself; but having never transcribed an interview before I found the process very time consuming. For example, a forty five minute interview could take anything from eight to ten hours to transcribe. Whilst undertaking the transcription of the early interviews I found difficulty in following the direction and points being made by the interviewees. This was due mainly to the interviewee changing tack and starting to discuss something else which they felt was also relevant to the interview but crossed over into other themes under discussion. Many times during the transcription of the early interviews I felt that some data seemed not to be

relevant to my research. However, when reading back the full transcription, the content and the context in which certain statements were made became clearer (Noaks and Wincup 2004, Richards 2009). As my workload increased due to the research expanding into other areas, I took the decision to pay someone to transcribe my interviews thus freeing up my time to concentrate on other aspects of the research. Subsequently my initial concerns regarding the content of the interview whilst transcribing were removed, and I could concentrate on the full transcript.

Once transcribed, I read through the interviews to ensure that the information and responses to my questions were relevant to the original aims and objectives of the research. This process identified how methods of questioning may be improved in future interviews (Noaks and Wincup 2004). It also provided information on issues that I may not have been aware of which I could use as prompts in my next interview. How this data was processed and analysed will be addressed in the following section.

Data Processing and Analysis

Having collected large amounts of data from the transcriptions the next step was to process and analyse the transcripts (Bachman and Schutt 2007). This process started after ten transcripts were completed. I decided to start at this particular stage rather than wait until all transcriptions were completed, mainly because of the amount of data the transcriptions had produced. It would also make the analysis of later transcriptions less time consuming, having already identified concepts and categories.

The first stage of the process was to identify four broad conceptual headings which reflected the interview headings (Benini 2000, Miles and Huberman 1994, Pfeifer 2000, Sarantakos 2005). These headings were;

- criminal justice
- rurality
- victims' experiences
- partnership working

Next I re-read the transcripts and started to identify data that demonstrated some commonalities and placed them under the relevant heading. Having completed this process I reflected on the data collated and made notes and started to identify emerging themes from each category. Through this thematic approach I started to create sub-headings under each of the four conceptual categories (Bullman 2008, Neuman 2006, Noaks and Wincup 2004, Richards 2009). The themes that started to emerge were;

- distance and time
- isolation
- access to services
- class
- patriarchy
- Domestic Violence Forums
- police
- magistrates
- accommodation

The next stage involved re-reading the selected data and placing it under the relevant sub-heading. Having completed this task I re-assessed the data identifying themes emerging under the sub-headings (Bachman and Schutt 2007, Noaks and Wincup 2004, Sarantakos 2005). For example, under police this was broken down into their response to domestic violence, their involvement in Forums and strategic developments. This allowed me to start to link data under different sections to show how concepts were interrelated and influenced each other, establishing commonalities (Benini 2000, Miles and Huberman 1994, Pfeifer 2000, Sarantakos 2005).

Once this process was completed I re-read the data to look for further patterns emerging and evaluated the quality of the data. On reflection some of the quotes included under the sub-headings were too descriptive and were edited or removed. Also quotes that had appeared more than once were taken out. Having broken down and categorised the data into thematic sections I then re-read the transcripts again to see whether relevant data from the first trawl had been missed (Bachman and Schutt

2007, Gilbert 2008, Neuman 2006, Richards 2009). This exercise was repeated a third time and was productive in producing further rich data. Text taken from the transcripts was colour coded to show that it had been used and in which of the three trawls it had been used. The end result was that I had four separate thematic documents which ultimately formed the basis of the three findings chapters.

Literature Review

To gain a more in-depth understanding of domestic violence and familiarise myself with the literature in general, specifically the themes which related to the findings of the thesis, I undertook a methodical approach to the task. To understand the extent and impact of domestic violence my review covered literature by authors such as Dobash and Dobash (1992) and Walby and Allen (2004). From the review of this literature I made notes of references to themes which were starting to emerge from the findings. For example, access to services led me to review literature by Cramer and Carter (2002) and Hague (2005) among others. As well as gaining knowledge on different aspects of domestic violence I also took note of other studies and how they had approached and evaluated their work which informed my own work and the suitability of my methods.

Through this thematic approach to the literature it became clear that a vast amount of literature was from an urban perspective, although more contemporary literature, such as McCarry and Williamson (2009) and Rawsthorne (2008) had explored the nature of rural domestic violence which reflected some of the themes emerging from the findings of my own research. Distance, location of services and isolation in a rural setting highlighted more problems for women experiencing domestic violence than was reflected in the urban based literature. For example, the limited amount of refuge places and its location resulting in refuge provision not being a practical option for many victims. A wider scan of the literature explored issues of partnership working, governance and criminal justice approaches to domestic violence. The review of the criminal justice literature was both historical and contemporary; exploring issues of the changing nature of the police response to domestic violence and the incremental changes which have taken place over the last forty years. As the thesis has a rural

focus I also reviewed related literature looking specifically at definitions of rural and also general issues associated with rurality, for example housing, perceptions of the countryside and the issues associated with close knit communities. The literature review was constantly driven by findings emerging from the research and also the need to be aware of more general issues related to the topic.

Questions of power, femininity and masculinity were also explored. Although the main body of literature focused on the urban context, I knew from personal experience that many of the issues were just as, if not more, prevalent in rural as urban areas. The small amount of literature on domestic violence set in a rural context confirmed problems of distance, location of services and isolation. This was complemented by the availability of a small amount of literature which specifically focused on domestic violence in Northumberland (Davies, Thompson and Francis 2000). I became aware of this localised literature on domestic violence through working in Northumberland with partners who had been involved in the research, or who worked in the domestic violence field. This micro level literature complemented the macro level literature, and gave me an informative grounding on issues of domestic violence. It also highlighted issues on domestic violence specific to rural areas and offered encouragement that more comprehensive research would uncover additional information regarding rural domestic violence. Moreover, it assisted in informing my research and helped me to gain an understanding that domestic violence against women is not just the physical, but can also be economic, sexual and of a physiological nature.

The review of the academic and scholarly research literature also provided for exploration of the theoretical literature in relation to crime and punishment policy and legislation, an insight into criminal justice practice and an appreciation of research methods and findings. This has involved carrying out a thorough review of academic and scholarly literature, relevant books, journal articles and periodical articles on domestic violence (Bryman 2001, Crow and Semmens 2008, Green 2008, Neuman 2006). The review was secured through the use of a range of search services. Access to the internet allowed a review of historical and recent relevant online journal articles and access to the electronic data bases and various search engines such as NORA,

Cambridge Scientific Abstracts, ZETOC and the BIDS system has proved essential in identifying relevant and key materials. Keyword searches were carried out. This involved combining 'domestic violence' and 'rural' with a variety of related keywords and phrases. These included 'domestic violence in rural areas,' 'domestic violence and criminal justice' 'police response to domestic violence in rural areas,' 'rurality and crime,' 'domestic violence - women's experiences.' As with the domestic violence literature I was able to access more local based literature due to working in a Community Safety environment based in Northumberland.

Published and Unpublished Documentary Analysis

Complementary to carrying out the review of the academic and scholarly research I dedicated time to;

a) Collecting, collating and critically reviewing policy, procedure and legislative documents published at both local and national levels as well as all other relevant material including, Home Office Circulars. This also included an analysis of national and local strategic developments. The purpose of this was to develop knowledge and understanding of how national and local policies and legislation have developed in relation to domestic violence. The collection of government and legislative data was collated via access to the Home Office web site, and complementing this I received, via my workplace e-mail, daily up-dates from the Home Office on developments in certain policy areas. This allowed me to keep up-to-date with domestic violence and related subjects.

b) All local and regional relevant material specifically related to crime, disorder and domestic violence was collected and analysed including all relevant minutes of meetings and funding bids. This documentary analysis helped establish the extent by which local organisations and agencies had responded to the issues surrounding the rural nature of domestic violence. It also allowed for the examination of data collection by organisations and agencies, referrals across agencies, partnership working between organisations and agencies and the nature of 'relevance' of service provision in relation to rural victims and survivors. For example, how Domestic

Violence Forums, CDRPs and countywide bodies had, or had not, worked in partnership to deliver improved service provision and the impact this has had on victims' experiences. The collection of the local and regional data was accessed through working in a community safety setting within Northumberland. As Drug Development Worker covering two out of six Districts within Northumberland, I attended CDRP meetings, Domestic Violence Fora and also Regional groups. From these I received minutes of the meetings, and any relevant documents that were circulated with the minutes. Colleagues provided me with minutes, documents etc for those meetings which I was unable to attend. Admittedly there are some gaps, specifically in early documentation; however, this has not significantly hampered my research.

c) The collation of crime and statistical data allowed for the analysis of the extent of rural crime in general and domestic violence in particular. Other statistical data collected provided an insight as to the amount of data collected in relation to domestic violence. This documentary analysis was constantly on-going and helped provide up-to-date information. The crime and statistical data was sourced from the channels mentioned above. Collectively all three methods of collating the data have proved to be productive and fruitful.

Ethical Considerations

As has been highlighted throughout this chapter, ethical issues were considered and adhered to at all times. This adherence complied with the Northumbria University's Research Ethics and Governance Guidelines. Nevertheless, to conduct the research in an ethical manner was fundamental, particularly to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of stakeholders and victims. Underpinning the ethical approach was the need to show respect for the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of all participants.

I was aware that, before embarking upon interviews, there would be number of both professional and ethical issues to consider; specifically connected to my position as Drug Development Worker and the established role I had with a number of my

identified interviewees. I was conscious that this may restrict the quality of information or create a barrier for disclosure, even when confidentiality was assured. However, anonymity may have allowed for interviewees to be more forthcoming with sensitive information. Moreover, I was aware that earlier conversations I had had with colleagues, which related to the research, may have influenced them or subconsciously informed their answers during their interviews.

It was fundamental that I made my position clear to those work colleagues regarding my intentions for the research, including the confidential handling of interview information. I was aware that I could have undertaken a more covert approach to my research and used conversations with colleagues as a basis of putting together my thesis. However, this type of covert research is 'bad science,' and to believe that it was possible to conceal the true nature of my intentions would have been unethical (Bachman and Schutt 2007, Bulmer 2008, Erikson 1967). An overt approach ensured that as many colleagues as possible were aware of my research. I felt this optimised my prospects for being kept informed of developments.

I was aware that there may also have been a feeling amongst some that I was only partaking in the Forums etc., for my own ends. In consequence, I may have been deliberately excluded from groups, sub-groups etc., as a means of the groups avoiding any criticism, comment or otherwise, regarding domestic violence and the development of strategies. Some of these concerns are more valid than others. However, I was cognisant of what effect they would have had on the aims and objectives of the research.

As a male researcher intending to interview female victims of domestic violence, I felt it vital to be fully aware of the potential difficulties and issues this could raise. The role of gender can have both a positive and negative impact on interaction between male researcher and a female victim of domestic violence. Any work with victims of domestic violence needs to be handled very sensitively and the researcher needs a comprehensive knowledge of the issues (Beck 1999, Noaks and Wincup 2004). One of the most important aspects is how males traditionally perceive women. According to Harding (2004, 460) the questions men tend to want answered 'have all too often

arisen from desires to pacify, control, exploit or manipulate.’ Furthermore, traditionally, men can be seen as reasonable whereas women are perceived as emotional (May 1997).

The assumption that all men hold these views and the widely held perspective that men cannot make any worthwhile contribution to feminist debates could, potentially, have a fundamental impact on myself as a researcher. Harding (2004) argues that this view is false, but there remains a question, posed by some, as to whether it is appropriate for men to interview female victims of crimes such as domestic violence (Abbott and Sapsford 2008).

Having being aware of gender issues and especially the potential problems associated with a male researcher interviewing female victims of domestic violence I feel, with hindsight, no major problems occurred. Whilst there was difficulty in acquiring a sufficient number of victims, I certainly was not left with the impression that being a male researcher had any bearing on this outcome. As I have reflected above, the interviews with victims were conducted in accommodating environments which were conducive to both parties. Moreover, my contact with the staff of the refuge and Women’s Health Advice Centre (WHAC) was positive and I always found them most cooperative and understanding of the research I was undertaking.

Gaining access to the police is known to be difficult to negotiate as they are known to be sensitive to allow access to social researchers (Hughes 2000, Jupp 1995). For example, they may be protective or sensitive to the exposure to the public of certain police practices, such as cop culture (see Manning 1974). Furthermore, access to the higher echelons of the police is uncommon, Reiner (1991) being an exception. However, in terms of this research access to the police was impressive. The Chief Superintendent acted upon my letter and all but two officers agreed to be interviewed. Those officers interviewed were accommodating and gave detailed answers to the questions asked.

Throughout the duration of the research, and to my knowledge, there were no ethical issues raised by gatekeepers, stakeholders or victims regarding my role as a worker

and researcher or a male researching domestic violence. I was fully aware that I needed to maintain professional integrity and objectivity when conducting the research. After collating and interpreting the data I was also aware that I needed to report the data accurately and to avoid fabrication and falsification. Overall I am confident that all avenues regarding ethics were considered and adhered to and the thesis is ethically grounded.

Summary

Overall the methods used for this research have been productive. Whilst three individuals declined to be interviewed the vast majority did agree, which provided a large amount of rich data which was subsequently used for the findings chapters. My role as a worker operating in the research site and as a male researcher studying domestic violence threw up contrasting scenarios. As a worker the main obstacle I encountered was, I felt, being ‘frozen out’ by certain individuals and sub-groups etc which may not have occurred had I not been carrying out my research. These problems only surfaced after the demise of the NDVP and a new strategic approach was attempted. At this time tension and conflict was surfacing between certain individuals which may have contributed to being ‘frozen out.’ Whilst I do not take my perceived exclusion personally, I think it was just one example of many unwelcome developments at that particular time. However, the majority of those I encountered were helpful and supportive. Transcribing, data analysis and processing were time consuming but were very fruitful and helped enhance my skills in this area.

CHAPTER 5

PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN RURAL NORTHUMBERLAND

Introduction

This chapter examines agencies' perceptions on how they perceive victims' experiences of domestic violence. The chapter sets out to understand and contextualise the findings drawn from interviews with agency workers and how they relate to the reviewed academic and scholarly literature. Moreover, the chapter explores how rurality impacts on victims' experiences of domestic violence. This has been achieved by taking a thematic approach which has resulted in three main themes emerging. These are distance and time, isolation and solidarity and culture and patriarchy.

Distance and time explores the location of services, access to services and the extent rurality impacts in the provision of services. Access and availability of public transport is examined as well as the location of police stations. Isolation and solidarity explores the location of farm houses and the isolation of victims. Solidarity examines the disparity which occurs in small rural communities, providing support to the victim on one hand and isolation on the other due to everyone knowing each other's business. Culture and misogyny explores agencies views and general perceptions of attitudes and culture associated with men and the way they view the opposite sex and the division of gender roles within society. This is reflected in the use of language and the use of certain words and phrases which are specifically rural and related to the cultural traditions of the countryside.

Distance and Time

This section will examine the agencies' viewpoint of how they feel distance and time impact on victims' experiences of domestic violence. Distance and time will be explored in relation to victims' access to services, the location of police stations and

how service providers are affected by the rural nature of Northumberland and how they feel this impacts on victims' experiences.

Victims' Access to Services

Service provision for victims of domestic violence in rural Northumberland is perceived as poor by agency representatives; and what services exist, are far from accessible for those residing in the more rural areas of the County. Evidence suggests that generally access to services in rural areas is problematic (Eastman and Bunch 2007, Garland and Chakraparti 2007, Little 2002, Logan, Von Hightower and Gorton 2001, Walker and Levkefeld 2001). Service provision in Northumberland is mainly situated in the South East of the County, although there are some located in the market towns of the North and West. The women's refuge is situated in the South East whilst two part-time domestic violence services operate in the North and West. Access to these services is perceived as problematic, particularly the further people live from the market towns and the South East corner of Northumberland, as Freda explains;

'My knowledge leads me to believe, having conducted a lot of research in Tynedale, that rural issues and things like isolation like services are a very, very big problem. They cause great deals of cause a lot of obstacles in the way that people are able to access services'. (Freda: 2)

The main problem identified by over a third of agency representatives was one of transport and the impact this can have as Freda explains;

'If you don't have transport to get into the main town centre, that's obviously gonna effect your access to services'. (Freda: 7)

Not having access to a car, for example, leaves few options from which a victim can choose; which in turn limits their access to services. Other options available are public transport, which in the more outlying areas, is very limited. Bus services in rural areas and their availability have deteriorated since the deregulation of public

transport over twenty years ago. For some living in outlying rural areas, this may mean there are only one or two buses per week. As with service provision, studies have shown that lack of public transport in rural areas is a concern (Bosch and Schumm 2004, Cloke, Goodman, Milbourne and Thomas 1995, Heise et al 2002, Rawsthorne 2008). How this impacts on access to services by victims of domestic violence is explained by Barbara who states that;

'I think accessing, (services) particular for very rural areas, where transport is a problem...I think there are two buses a week, so if it happens you decide you've got to come in and see us on Thursday, then tough luck you'll have to wait till Friday cos the bus comes on a Wednesday and a Friday. So again by the time you know, if you were in that situation and you thought that today I've had enough I'm going into the council offices tomorrow, oh I ain't going till Friday cos I got to travel to Newcastle to come down here. The moments lost'. (Barbara: 17/18)

Hannah also highlights the issue of limited public transport.

'..by the transport links....buses either run once every two hours, once every day, or you can get them running once a week. And to me that is rural'. (Hannah: 1)

The lack of public transport was also raised by Cindy, one of the victims I interviewed who resided in a rural area. When asked about the availability of public transport she replied;

'No, not where we live. A bus every day or something'. (Cindy: 22)

However, another issue raised by the other two victims I interviewed regarding public transport was the cost of travelling on public transport. Both these women resided at the refuge but came from the Tyneside area. They had access to public transport but found the cost of returning to Tyneside to meet friends and family an expensive journey, as Andrea explains;

'The shuttle bus takes you to Newcastle...The first time I got there it was £2.80 to go

to Newcastle and £2.80 back and then I realised there was a return for £4.60, but it's expensive and I can only afford to go once a week.....I can't afford it, I can afford to go once a week and that's it... (Andrea: 34)

The cost of public transport was also a concern for Ella as she explains;

'...in the first couple of weeks I was here, it cost us probably cost about £14, that's in bus fares'. (Ella: 39)

Gloria highlights other difficulties, such as getting to work, by saying that;

'It's more difficult to get work because you have to travel from rural areas into town to work mainly, poor bus service means you're limited to what work you can take. And if you don't drive then you're stuck basically'. (Gloria: 2)

It is perceived that many victims would ideally like services to be available without having the added stress of relying on the availability of public transport. This would mean services needed to be situated in the more rural areas which is supported by previous studies (Eastman and Bunch 2007, Henderson 1997, Hodge and Monk 2004, Powe and Shaw 2004, Williams 1999). These services, however, would need to be private and confidential so as not to attract attention and therefore increase the possibility of stigmatisation. The situation for everyone in rural areas is not ideal, but is compounded more in times of crisis as Michael states;

'They're (Victims) reliant upon things being within geographically easy reach. Lack of transport infrastructure, that if they leave their home and don't have access to a car, how are they going to get anywhere? Or lack of services which can respond appropriately at the time of crisis and be available. After that, I would say the lack of support that's around generally...' (Michael: 7)

Research has shown that police stations, especially in the more rural areas of the country, are mainly situated in the market towns. In some cases these stations will not be staffed twenty four hours a day (Gilling and Pierpoint 1999, Mawby 2006).

Williams (1999) found that if the police are called to an incident of domestic violence in a more rural area, the distance and time it takes them to respond has an impact, as Ingrid explains;

*'There's not manned police stations, there are sometimes travelling time as well...you know, the response time for the police, it can be crucial, particular for the victim'.
(Ingrid: 4)*

The issue of response time is highlighted particularly, especially when it may take twenty minutes or more this can, in more serious cases, mean the difference between life and death. Kirsty makes a similar point by stating;

'If they've (Police) got a long distance to travel anything could have happened by the time they get there. So it has, it has to I think with anything...not just domestic violence'. (Kirsty: 6)

Most incidents of domestic violence happen between the hours of 10.00 p.m. and 2.00 a.m., these times coinciding with times when rural police stations are not be staffed. Consequently, if the nearest staffed station is situated in the market town but the incident is twenty miles away, this is going to have a fundamental effect on how quickly the police can arrive at the scene of the incident. This will also determine whether the victim will report or not, after they consider the distance the police have to travel and the time this will take.

A further problem arises when the police arrive at the scene and decide to arrest the perpetrator. There may not be facilities at the local police station to lock the perpetrator up, and therefore the police need to travel even further to a police station which is equipped to detain offenders overnight (Williams 1999). The distance and time this takes, together with the processing of the perpetrator may, in some cases, take the best part of a shift, thus depriving that rural community of a police presence. The location of police stations with adequate facilities is an issue for Larry who states;

'As far as I'm aware at the moment they can still lock up at Alnwick and Berwick.

What would concern me greatly is if they were locking up and had to take them to Bedlington, because that would definitely have a big impact. As you know that if you lock somebody up at Wooler and you've got to drive into Bedlington and process them and then drive back, then that's effectively your whole shift gone'. (Larry: 11)

Whilst Pauline concedes that the response may not be adequate;

'If I am honest, I cannot really say a lot about what the difference is in rural Northumberland. (Police response) I doubt it is adequate because there is not enough'. (Pauline: 14/15)

Whilst for the rural parts of Northumberland the police response times are a concern, the experience of those residing in the more urban parts of the county also highlights similar problems. Because of the geographical nature of Northumberland some of the more urban areas can also have parts which are quite remote. Therefore residents, and particularly victims of domestic violence, can have the same experiences with police call out times as their counterparts in the more rural areas. Another part of the same equation is the number of officers who are actually available in any one shift which also has an impact on response time, as Michael explains;

'I mean knowing the rural resources that the police can put into even the South East Northumberland corner, and we're fairly compact. When you start talking of, even in Castle Morpeth, having to cover an area at night from Druridge Bay to Ponteland, to respond to an incident with perhaps a limited number of officers available and other incidents which may take priority, then that has an effect. As opposed to for example, Wansbeck - 25 square miles - it's a bit easier to police that area than it is in Tynedale, Berwick, Amble and Alnwick'. (Michael: 5)

These difficulties faced by the police and experienced by victims can equally be experienced by service providers. Issues concerning resources, distance and time are all familiar to service providers. However, if an agency does not provide an out of hour's service, this automatically has a fundamental impact on the victim in terms of their experience and isolation. Even when the agency does provide an out of hour's

service this can still be, due to rurality, fraught with difficulties. The real life example, recalled by Renee, is case in point.

'I mean just for instance, one night when I was on-call, we got a call from the police at Berwick about a woman who lived out between Berwick and Coldstream and the police were willing to bring her as far as Berwick Police Station but no further. We had an account with a taxi firm who was supposedly 24 hours. I could not raise them either so basically I ended up getting in my car at 2am in the morning, driving to Berwick picking up this girl and her children up and taking them down where the refuge was based then, in, Ashington. Getting them settled in, making them a cup of tea etc, and then basically I just stayed there because it was nearly time to go to work anyway so then I did a full days work and was back on-call that night. So that was initially because at the time I was the only person who lived in the rural parts of Northumberland and also the only driver at that point, so it did make it really difficult'. (Renee: 5)

The issues raised by Renee relate to lack of resources, reliability of other services (in this case the taxi firm) but also the commitment of staff to deal with emergency situations. The distance travelled by Renee from Berwick to the refuge is approximately 50 miles which gives an indication of how the geographical nature of Northumberland can impact on service provision. Moreover, if Renee was not available on this occasion what would have happened to the woman and her children? It also highlights the lack of twenty four hour service provision which is countered by the good will of existing staff.

This example highlights the difficulties faced by providers especially those in the remote and intermediate rural areas. There are other problems which are linked to the geographical nature of Northumberland, such as attendance at meetings, especially ones held in outlying rural areas, or for service providers who work in the more rural areas having to travel to the South East for meetings. The concerns raised by nearly a quarter of respondents were about the time it takes to travel to and from more rural areas for meetings. For example, it can take over an hour to travel to a meeting, which lasts two hours (Welsh 2008) and requires a further hour to return to base; this

is the best part of a working day. This also means a reduced service or no service being provided during this period. This is explained by Pauline who states;

I think just getting people together when you are talking about the size of the county we live in. So somebody coming from Hexham to a meeting in Ashington or Morpeth, it is not very fair but you say to me the meetings are going to be held in HexhamSo even that makes it difficult because of the very size of the county and a lot of rural places. They are really spread out'. (Pauline: 14)

Pauline continues by saying;

'So you will have to be really careful about what is planned and it is very important and it makes it harder for partnerships and also more expensive because if there is far to travel. I think being realistic, I think it is probably better having a couple of seminar type days that everybody could go to and do workshops and things'. (Pauline: 14)

The concern for service providers is that time spent in meetings and travelling means less contact time with victims. However, the same scenario arises if providers need to visit a client who lives in a more extreme rural area as Kirsty explains;

'I mean I know my job it is going across to somewhere like Tynedale with the allocated time that you've only got one person in Tynedale, it's very hard to make any in-roads into anything bar actually going to see the lady. By the time you get there and by the time you get back, that's the time spent on that lady'. (Kirsty: 5)

This scenario does not mean that the client should not be seen, but emphasises how the lack of services, especially in the more extreme rural areas, can affect both victim and provider. Evidence suggests that distance and time does impact on victims' experiences in different ways, especially regarding lack of transport and police response times. The next section explores further issues that providers perceive to be problematic for victims of domestic violence in rural areas.

Isolation and Solidarity

Isolation, in terms of this study, relates to how victims are perceived to be cut off, not just from service provision as discussed in the previous section, but how farm houses and cottages are located in isolated and extreme rural areas which can contribute to a victim's isolation from services and the general public. Solidarity on the other hand can come from living in small, close knit rural communities where support is forthcoming. However, Frank (2003), Wendt (2009) and Williams (1999) found small knit rural communities can also feel very isolating because of the fact everyone knows each other and this makes it harder for a victim to disclose they are suffering abuse.

One of the concerns raised by approximately 20% of service providers interviewed was the remoteness of some farm houses. The surrounding environment of these farm buildings may mean that there are no dwellings within a mile or more highlighting the extreme nature of rurality (Phillips and Williams 1985). Access to the farm house is via a farm track which means the main road could be a number of miles away (Hornosty and Doherty 2001, Murty et al 2003). Moreover, the main road is most likely to be a 'B' road and the prospect of a bus stop or telephone box being available is not a distinct possibility. This isolation from contact with the outside world shows how, for victims of domestic violence in this situation, the feeling of hopelessness cannot be underestimated. Even if there are a few farm cottages situated on the farm they will, in all probability, be many miles from the main farm house and may not be occupied. Wendt (2009) suggests the location of remote farm houses means abuse can take place with the perpetrator knowing, due to the isolated surroundings that his victim's call for help will not be heard. Freda draws on her own research to explain the situation;

'I think in terms of the rural aspects...if I think about the people I interviewed as part of the research, and I interviewed six people in Tynedale. For some people the fact that they lived in a rural area presented an extra problem to them. One woman that I remember described her husband was a farm estate worker, worked for some Lord somewhere. And she said very clearly that they lived in a cottage on the estate and it

was a really good place for someone to abuse somebody. That's exactly what she said, because there was no neighbours' to hear. There was nobody that you could run to. So I think that's kinda extreme part of rural living, because not everyone lives on a Lorded estate'. (Freda: 3)

Therefore, a victim's contact with the outside world is minimal. The advent of new technology such as mobile phones and computers are not necessarily able to assist a victim if the perpetrator checks telephone texts or messages, and does not allow the victim access to the computer. Moreover, in some of the extreme rural areas of Northumberland a mobile signal is not available. Bringing these issues together Hannah links them with the problem of transport by stating;

Completely isolated...then if they are living in a village where they can't get anywhere they got no transport and he's not letting them out then they're more isolated again, and it's just being completely alone with nobody to turn to. Very, very hard'. (Hannah: 3)

The point is further developed by Celia, a front line worker, who explains;

'So if you've been locked in your bedroom in a remote farmhouse. Who do you talk to? If he uses, check your computer access, checks your text messages, phone messages. So how do you access services? So I think it's a question of contact whether it's a health visitor visiting a child who can look for signs and ask the questions'. (Celia: 10)

Isolation, the location etc, of farm houses and the opportunities for domestic violence to take place are explained by Kirsty, who links this isolation with the failure of the victim to report an incident;

'I think in rural areas you get more farming areas where women are terribly isolated, you know. And as far as the domestic violence part of things go you don't hear so much of it, until it really comes to a head and it's probably been going on for years and years. Where I think around this area, the South East Northumberland area, I

think people just talk about it more openly anyway'. (Kirsty: 1)

However, it is not only in rural farm houses that a victim can feel isolated. One of the victims interviewed spoke about isolation but resided in an urban area. She recalls her experience by stating;

'It's really horrible. I mean I was cut off from me friends, cut off from me family, you never knew what mood he was going to be in...' (Andrea: 10)

Reporting Incidents

One of the themes to emerge, related to isolation, was reasons why women do not immediately report incidents of domestic violence. It is well known that women can have suffered up to thirty five incidents of abuse before they report to anyone (Yearnshire 1997). It is also difficult for service providers, in this case health visitors, to ask if a person is suffering abuse in the knowledge that if they say 'yes', there are no services to refer them to; or there are services, but not local, thus reflecting the issues of distance and time, difficulties with access to transport etc. Moreover, there are a number of other reasons as to why a victim may not report the abuse as Nina explains;

Well it's clear that there are - you get women that have had years and years of abuse without reporting but there's all sorts of issues - financial issues, I can't afford to leave, I love him I don't want to leave, what will I move to, you've got no home, you've got no money, you've got no stuff, your children are settled, you put up with it for the kids, I think all the classic reasons. The most dangerous time for a woman is when she is leaving, but you find that the violence will escalate...If I leave will he come and get me...Where do I go? Yes well I don't, I think that the refuge provision is an issue...a lot of councils say there are bed spaces and I personally wouldn't want to go to a homeless unit, or a room in an old folks home, you know, you can see why women say oh - I'd really rather not - I want to shut my head down and just try and let it pass...' (Nina: 18)

Dawn offers more specific reasons, similar to those of Wendt (2009) and Williams (1999), and interlinks the issue of isolation and confidentiality and the fact that victims do not want others in the community to know about their personal circumstances;

'They could be totally dependent on their husbands or wife. They don't want to break the family up. They're too frightened, they've got no family, they're very isolated, the fact that they don't want to hang their dirty washing out. People feel like that don't they'? (Dawn: 9)

Pauline's concern is that victims may not report due to the fact they will not be believed;

'They worry about not being believed. And then it is like, where do you go? I keep thinking, if I did not work in this sector and knew about some of the stuff would I know where to go'. (Pauline: 18)

She continues by saying;

'Most of them that we maybe see, the reason they do not report them is because, all they want to happen is for them to stop. They do not want their.....they do not want their kids' dad in jail. That is not what they want, they might want them to go for help and get help but most of the women, when you ask them what would you like to happen, they just want it to stop and I want some peace, to be left in peace. They don't want to fight. They are not used to fighting with this bloke either so going and reporting them is the scariest thing to do and it could trigger things, it could lead to them getting seriously injured'. (Pauline: 19/20)

But on the other hand Pauline identifies another reason as to why women may not report;

'....but there is also a bit about a lot of women do not recognise it as domestic violence either, what is happening to them, because he might not have actually beaten

her to a pulp and because that is the picture that people have. You would have to be badly beaten and end up in hospital, whatever, and then you are suffering domestic violence'. (Pauline: 18/19)

This point is also raised by Joan who states;

'... a lot of women are, I suspect, are sitting a home and thinking, well, I'm not being hit actually. Although I'm not treat the way I want to be treat, I'll carry on because I'm not being hit. If they realised that, yes, that is abuse and it's not acceptable, they may move'. (Joan: 3)

Pauline states that sometimes women just want time, and someone to talk to before making a decision about what to do next;

'Sometimes what I found they need is a time to get their self esteem built up, to be able to make that move to either report it or just get out of the situation. And they have somewhere to fall back onto for support.....whereas as soon as things start getting reported, the control is taken away'. (Pauline: 20)

Whereas Larry felt that victims just wanted the perpetrator out of the way until things had calmed down, as he explains;

'On some occasions they (women) didn't want to be referred they just wanted the man out of the road and the situation kind of calmed down'. (Larry: 3)

If they decide to leave then, as mentioned above, there is limited provision. If the victim was allocated a place in the 'local' refuge, Amy foresees problems arising from the location of the refuge as she explains;

'....there are particular problems with the refuge being situated in the South East. One argument is that incidents of domestic violence is higher in the South East and therefore it's the correct place to situate it, even the limited refuge provision there is available. But the other side of the argument is that there is a whole network of

women, a whole range of people right throughout North Northumberland and South West Northumberland who aren't coming forward as victims of domestic violence because they know that there is absolutely no way that any of the existing services are going to help them. So the argument is that there maybe a whole, a vast number, of un-reported incidents of domestic violence in the rural areas and victims literally suffering in silence and isolation in rural areas'. (Amy: 1)

There are other reasons as to why victims do not report and which compounds their sense of isolation. Whilst these may not be directly connected to rurality, the fact that the person lives in a rural area compounds the problem. In some instances, if victims are not experiencing physical abuse, they feel that they are not suffering from domestic violence because they are not being hit (Burke et al 2001, Hanmer 2000, Kearney 2001). The issue of whether a woman is suffering from domestic violence because they are not being physically abused was a point made by Andrea, a victim, who said;

'He wasn't really a violent person, never hit me. Of course, he was very abusive'. (Andrea: 5)

This perception of Andrea's, that she needed to be physically abused to be suffering from domestic violence, clouded her thinking when she was considering looking for help as she explains;

'I was thinking, well, you've got to be hit before you can go somewhere, you know, and because I wasn't actually hit, I was thinking well, they are not going to do anything to help us'. (Andrea: 16)

Nevertheless, she concedes that if she had been physically abused her present situation would have been totally different;

'I mean if he'd just whacked us that would have been it, I would have just walked out the door, years ago; I wouldn't have been here today...' (Andrea: 50)

Barbara has concerns about the role of the police in rural areas and how this can affect the victim from reporting;

'For example in Stamfordham their local bobby lives in Stamfordham, in the police house, not far from our council estate which is right in the centre of the village. So, yes, the chances are he would know all the residents there, so on and so forth. So I think that's a difficult hurdle to overcome, and I think that's unfortunate for the people with concerns. But I'm sure he's very nice, switched on and tuned in and up for it person. But the perception is, how can I go and tell him, he drinks with my husband in the pub.' (Barbara: 19)

Joan raises a similar scenario but the profession is different;

'I mean you're not going to tell the school if the teacher lives two doors down from you...Possibly drinks with your husband in the local pub'. (Joan: 10)

Whereas Amy relates stigma and humiliation that victims may feel which in turn stops them reporting to the police.

'...also in a close knit community like that the element of shame that's always associated with domestic violence would weigh more heavily because people are more humiliated by what happens to them and then, sort of extra humiliation by having to tell people that its happened that I'm sure it would inhibit them. And there have been one or two who've said that they don't like going to the police in the Tynedale area because obviously not all the police come from the Tynedale area but some do, and so there is that reluctance to engage with the police...' (Amy: 8)

Amy continues by highlighting how victims in outlying rural areas may not report because of familiarity with their GP;

'Even if the GP would treat matters entirely confidentially, and I'm sure they would. The fear would be in the victim's mind that because that doctor may be the husband's doctor and the doctor of the perpetrator's mum and all the other relatives. I believe

the fear would definitely be in the victim's mind that she couldn't talk about what he might do'. (Amy: 8)

This is emphasised further by Celia who says;

'Because if you go to the doctor and it's your aunt on reception you're not going to believe she's not going to read the notes, or tap into the computer....you just feel everybody will know.....' (Celia: 10)

As Kirkwood (1993) suggests even if victims are being physically abused they may fail to report due to the stigma attached to victims of domestic violence. There is also the paradox for the victim that the person they hate for the abuse, they also love in equal measure (Hoff 1990), and when the perpetrator says it won't happen again, the victim decides to give them another chance. Whilst the abuse may not happen again for a week or month, invariably it will, and the cycle of violence continues, even though the perpetrator has apologised saying it won't happen again. Also the victim tries to understand why the violence happens and then ends up making excuses for the bad person because all they want is the person they still love. The complexity of the situation and different emotions make it very difficult for the victim to be objective when making decisions. This paradox is explained by Amy who draws on her own personal experience;

'I would just say, from my own experience, that the emotions associated with domestic violence, although it was some years ago, are confused because it's the person you love as well as hate so it isn't always somebody you just hate that beats you to a pulp, you know it's the nice person and there's the bad person and you love this nice person which helps you make excuses for the bad person. And actually sometimes you understand why they've done it because life's just hell and so they've done this as a reaction to life just being hell. That's not a excuse but you rationalise what's happening because you love the person even though you hate them abusing you. So emotions are extremely complex and I think the emotional barriers are the hardest to encourage people to get over'. (Amy: 18)

Having identified how a victim can become isolated in a rural area, Joan suggests ways in which victims can explore ways of breaking from their isolation without putting themselves at further risk;

'...the women that are in rural areas are very, very isolated. A lot of the rural areas have no telephone lines. Maybe that they go into market once a week, or once a fortnight. They're given a certain amount of time to go and do their shopping....'
(Joan: 1)

However Hannah cautions against the agency worker deciding what is best for the victim;

'...when you are dealing with women you've got to make sure you're doing everything the way they want it done and you are not forcing your opinions on them, or forcing them to do things they're not ready to do like leave their partners or whatever. Because if you push them into a service...into using a service they'll probably never come back.they're just so frightened to report anything, their fear of going to court, the police, they just think everything is going to escalate and the biggest fear is they're going to be murdered. They don't know what's going to happen; it could be them, their kids'. (Hannah: 12/13)

Social Class and Isolation

Social class is one of the themes to emerge which is complex and adds not just to the problems of isolation for the victim, but also to stigmatisation. Research shows that rural areas are perceived to be dominated by the middle classes and the inhabitants of these areas are generally conservative with a small 'c' (Cloke 1990, Pahl 1965, Phillips and Williams 1985). This portrayal of a rural community compounds the belief that because rural areas are seen as idyllic, affluent and have a populace of 'nice people' (Bunce 2003, Robinson 1995), then domestic violence does not happen in this type of community. If the perception is that domestic violence does not happen here, then it becomes very difficult for victims from middle class backgrounds to report, and a lot of shame will be attached to the victim who admits to abuse going on in their

relationship.

If a victim from a middle class background works, or travels into the nearby town or city on a regular basis, then they will most probably have a network of friends and colleagues, some of who may become confidants. This eases the sense of isolation. This networking opportunity is not so readily available to someone suffering abuse and who does not have access to transport, is not employed and spends the best part of the day in the house. The other perception, also highlighted by Walker and McNichol (1994), is that domestic violence only happens in deprived areas and to a certain class of people, thus making it even more difficult for a middle class victim to be believed.

The issue of class and the complexities surrounding it for women experiencing domestic violence is discussed in more detail below by a range of service providers. Freda initiates the debate by saying that;

'If you are a middle class woman who isn't working and a full time mother, for example, married to an abusive husband or whatever, opportunities for disclosure are lessened. If you're a middle class woman who has a high category job you might have quite a strong social network at work. Your work might be in an urban area, some people have to travel don't they?' (Freda: 15)

Freda continues illustrating the point by drawing on her own research into domestic violence in rural Northumberland she states that;

'The very middle class participant who I interviewed who had a very high status job, she confided in her work mate and she knew the system. She knew what she had to do in order to resolve the situation. It didn't make it any easier for her at all, but she knew what she had to do....' (Freda: 15)

Eileen further expands on the issue when she states that;

'...if you come from a middle class background there's a lot more shame about admitting what's going on'. (Eileen: 9)

The feeling of shame which Eileen articulates adds to the pressure faced by those more affluent victims. This also highlights the differences faced by victims which is not just the rurality of their surroundings, but their social standing within the community. This point is developed further by Barbara, who suggests that there is a perception that domestic violence does not happen in affluent rural areas, and if a woman thinks she is suffering then there must be something wrong with her.

'I think that the message filters through to people as much as, if it doesn't exist here amongst all these very nice affluent people, then there must be something wrong with me'. (Barbara: 5)

The issue of shame is developed further by Joan who explains;

'I think in Northumberland it's still seen as a shameful thing to tell anybody you're suffering. I think they're very much of the old school where my family is absolutely solid and we're perfect and I think it's quite clear there's a huge, huge impact on women'. (Joan: 10)

The point is further emphasised by Pauline who states;

'I think there is still the misconception about only certain types of people, so if you are in the more middle class area, it may be doesn't happen'. (Pauline: 4)

Freda expands on her earlier argument by being more specific as to which areas in Northumberland are perceived as idyllic and domestic violence just does not happen in places like these.

'I think it leads the general public to believe that in places like Hexham, Halthwhistle....Hexham for example that domestic abuse doesn't happen here. Hexham's a nice place, or you know Morpeth's a nice place or whatever. So I think that's the general perception and I think it's just a wrong perception.....' (Freda: 3)

These agency representative's views highlight the perception that domestic violence does not happen in 'nice' rural areas, thus enforcing the point that this makes it harder for a victim to report. This perception is reinforced by Freda who suggests that the perception is that domestic violence only happens in deprived areas and amongst stereotypical single mothers and not realizing that anyone can be a perpetrator or victim.

'...most people think the only people who are domestically abused are people who live in very deprived environments....who are single parents, it's this kinda stereotype that there is a very marginalised, disenfranchised people in society. They don't realise that it could be a GP, it could be a university lecturer'. (Freda: 3)

Kirsty brings the discussion to a conclusion by arguing that until there is a realisation that domestic violence cuts across all sections of society, then nothing will be done about the ones who are suffering in silence. Kirsty states that;

'...I think people have to accept that it's there and not pretend that it's not...not to pretend it's not there just because they want their areas to seem a nice area to live in or...whatever reason they've got for it. I think they've got to accept that there's a problem there and until they accept there's a problem there, then there won't be anything done about it'. (Kirsty: 9)

As already mentioned above, access to services and service provision in rural areas is fraught with difficulties and 'it's a pretty bleak picture really' (Freda: 8). Pauline argues that if there are no or few services then the likelihood of victims reporting is somewhat limited.

'...if you don't have any facilities for things and you don't have them, it's hard to find out what is going on and it is harder in these places, especially in rural areas, because there is a lack of services, where do people go and actually report it?' (Pauline: 4)

Solutions

Michael acknowledges the problem of service provision in rural areas but suggests the problem maybe countywide and not just specific to rural areas, as he explains;

'I believe it's a problem across the whole area. I think personally, it is probably more hidden in the rural areas than it is in the South East corner. Because again they don't have the community network that perhaps you do in the South East or the concentration of services to which people can refer'. (Michael: 1)

The point of access to services is emphasised further by Eileen who states;

'Well I think it's a lot more difficult to access services in terms of things like child care, support of other agencies I suppose like Women's Aid and the refuges...I think if you are a victim of domestic violence in a rural area it's going to be a lot harder to get the support you might need'. (Eileen: 1)

Here, Eileen brings to the argument that whilst there may well be a service, other related services may not be available or affordable, such as child care. This therefore places another obstacle in the way of the victim. However, Larry develops the argument further by stating that providers may not ask the question whether the client is suffering from domestic violence because if the client answers 'yes' they have nothing to offer.

'In any kind of field, you don't ask the question because you don't want to open a can of worms because you can't offer them anything....a lot of the time it's, you don't ask the question because you've got nothing else to offer....And lets face it, if they're good enough to open up and tell you what the problem is, then they're obviously at the stage where they want some help'. (Larry: 4)

Furthermore, Joan links the points of isolation, rurality and access and also acknowledges that victims may not know services exist. The raising of awareness of services was recommended in a study by Hague, Mullender and Aris (2003).

'Because if the services aren't here they're going to sit here, they're going to go out, they're going to be lonely, they're not going to know what to do, where to turn. They'll go back.....I think it's (rurality) a huge impact because they haven't got the access to the services. They probably don't know these services exist'. (Joan: 10)

Some of the practical solutions providers came up with as a way of addressing the problem were how to use community resources more effectively; providing a service whilst at the same time making it discreet so there would be no stigma attached by accessing the buildings. The use of more outreach workers, which has a positive response from victims (Dunn 2008, Hague and Mullender 2005, Wilcox 2006), was also suggested as a way of facilitating the service provision in community settings as Joan explains;

'If you did coffee mornings at the local churches, or in the schools, or in the library, something of that nature that they can say to their husband I'm going to the library, or I'm going to the doctor's, and that somebody in that surgery do an outreach that's actually addressing it and they've got that link to talk to, to find out what their options are....And I think to do that they need to get more outreach staff in rural areas and the GP surgeries and what have you. Once these women know what their options are, and they're actually not going to be quite so scary, they're not going to go out there and have not tuppence to feed themselves...' (Joan: 11/12)

Joan's argument is developed further by Ingrid and supported by Hague, Mullender and Aris (2003), who suggests a one-stop-shop solution to the problem by stating;

'I think it's one of those things, until you need it, until you need a service you don't look for it. It's probably...personally I wouldn't know how to get in contact with people because I don't need that service at the moment. I think it's only when you're the issue you need that service, that you start to look for where you can get it. But I think what's needed is more streamlined and a more one-stop-shop approach to victims of domestic violence, so that when they need the service, they don't have to go to Social Services and then the council and then the support network'. (Ingrid: 5)

Amy draws on her personal experience of working with victims, and explores the benefits of having a one stop shop solution. She says;

'In the focus work that we did with the individuals and with groups, they told us that one of the most debilitating and destructive things about reporting domestic violence was to have to tell the whole story, the whole sorry personal saga, over and over again to a range of different people; and while each of the organisations and individuals might be sympathetic and supportive, it's just more than they can bear to do that over and over again. They might have to tell the police, then Social Services, then Housing, then the benefits people and so on and so forth. They feel that if they could just tell one person, and that person then becomes the advocate for putting a package of support together.....' (Amy: 3)

However, whilst Pauline sees the benefits of a one stop shop she also offers words of caution;

'It doesn't matter how many services you run, you cannot be everything to everybody and a one-stop-shop is a good idea but one person will not be able to fulfill everything either...The benefit is to the client because anybody coming through, if we have a decent knowledge of what else is available, then we can pass that on and that gives them choice and gives them more support because I would say to people, go to Victim Support, go to where ever, use as many of the services that you can and then if one is not working for you, you have the others to fall back onto and we have to encourage people to use as many of them as possible.' (Pauline: 13)

However, Freda cautions against this approach by drawing attention to the rural aspect;

'So I think the social fabric of a place the level of activity in the community centre, the general sense of safety and community that people have, have a massive effect on people's experience of that community. So if you're in a domestic abuse situation in Hadston...but you are able to go to the community centre and get some level of support, that will be a very different experience to living in Humshaugh where you

have no....these are rural areas which are kinda quite deprived', (Freda: 5)

Nevertheless, for these suggestions to become reality Michael argues that any co-ordinated response should be just that, and that agencies should not be precious about 'their' victims.

'....a realisation for some of those service providers that they are not the only stopping place and they should recognise that others can do another job which perhaps they're not geared up to do, and not being precious about we've got the victim, therefore it's ours....Co-ordinating development of services where we identify gaps and again not being so precious that only they can look at providing that, that there may be other ways of providing that service'. (Michael: 8)

The concept of having a one stop shop service was one touched upon by Ella who was one of the victims interviewed. She said;

'I think there should be a place in every town....every town, and I know it's hard and that money wise and that, but there should be a place where people can go to even if and if we say to the husband I'll go and do the shopping and you can just call in on their way....drop in kind of centre, go in and just say this has happened and that I'm feeling down whatever, and it's going a bit too far and that now...for kids and things like that, and places like that in every town where they can go and they say right...we'll try and do you want to leave now and look for somewhere for you....'
(Ella: 49)

Solidarity

The issue of solidarity in rural communities can be a double edged sword. Close knit communities can offer support and comfort on the one hand (Rawsthorne 2008, Williams 1999) and families may be supportive (Wilcox 2006); however, there are instances where support is less likely to be offered (Brownridge 2009, Shannon et al 2006). In a community where everyone one knows everyone, a victim of domestic violence may find it harder to disclose abuse, as Freda points out;

'... I think it's very difficult when you live in a small community when people know your business, to deal with your problems in a way you feel safe with'. (Freda: 6)

The strong sense of community can also mean that news travels quickly in small rural areas and that if a confidence is shared there is no guarantee that the rest of the community would not know within a matter of days (Dempsey 2002, Williams 1999). As Barbara says;

'Everybody knows everybody else, so word of mouth travels very quickly'. (Barbara: 16)

Whereas Gloria gives an example of how this closeness can translate into a practical situation;

'I think the set up of their communities is one big barrier, because everybody knows everybody else's business. So the GP is maybe the guy her husband drinks in the pub with every night....' (Gloria: 12)

Victims also raised the issue of stigma and not talking to anybody about the abuse they were suffering as Andrea explains;

'It's hard to say, I don't know because I'm quite a private person really, I don't like people knowing me business. Having said that, now that I've actually accepted things I've come out and I've told the world. I think I just needed to offload...' (Andrea: 29)
She continues by stating that;

'I wanted people to think I was happy and I was, you know, content, and all those things I wasn't you know....' (Andrea: 30)

Whereas for Ella there were consequences for disclosing domestic violence. She said;

'You would be the talk of the village wouldn't you?' (Ella: 38)

For Cindy who lived in a small rural village she devised a coping strategy to deal with the violence as she explains;

'The village...small and I knew people in the village but what I did was, I started to really isolate myself and I worked. I lived here for 11 years and my main focus was on work and I was actually helping women who were in situations the same as myself...it gave me a focus, a purpose and it was actually taking me away from home as well'. (Cindy: 6)

These real life examples give a flavour of further difficulties victims face in whether or not to disclose the violence they are suffering. As Cindy's example shows, this may include further isolation.

Due to the closeness of rural communities the likelihood is that many households are interrelated. This can make it difficult for a victim of domestic violence to disclose, through either fear of stigma, not being believed, or that the news will travel through the family network. Moreover, stigma could also be brought upon the children, particularly in small rural schools, if children are identified as coming from an abusive relationship. Also, as discussed above, there is a sense of shame especially if the victim is from a middle class background. Here Ingrid and Dawn reflect on their experiences of service provision in a small rural area. Ingrid begins by saying;

'Definitely because, certainly in Tynedale, what we find is that there's massive families that are interrelated and they've spread through villages and whatever. And it's just the fact that people don't want to be stigmatized and they don't want their children to be stigmatized. I think the big issue as well is for children, that nobody wants their....I mean most, in rural areas, probably children go to the same school as their friends and their family and I think they don't want - they're small schools, they're not big anonymous schools - and I think they don't want children to be stigmatized and talked about'. (Ingrid: 6)

Dawn adds a police perspective to the discussion by stating;

'It's not a problem in the quantity of referrals that come in. The problem comes when we try to deal with a particular incident that does come in, because everybody knows everybody else. Even when you get, you need somebody to kind of board a window up or put extra locks on doors if you're using outside agencies there's a strong possibility that person knows the family...the small villages are difficult in that respect'. (Dawn: 2)

Gloria and Hannah further develop the effects of close knit rural communities and how this can impact on a victim's experience. Gloria begins by stating;

'I think it's a bigger problem than people realise, again because of that isolation. Because of the small community you don't know whether you can talk to anybody. Who can you talk to? If you tell one person about it and it's through a small community in no time.....I think it's still absolute fear that once you tell somebody what the hell happens then'. (Gloria: 2)

Hannah continues the discussion by saying;

'I think the other problem with rural areas is everybody does know each other, secrets, you can't keep secrets. It's just like a fact of life that I've suddenly discovered. In urban areas you can be anonymous, you can walk around, you'll never know anybody and nobody will bother you. You could have been a mass murderer they couldn't really care. But up here...bloody hell'. (Hannah: 3)

The professions of residents in small local communities were a cause for concern especially for one service provider, whose response was based on her experience as a worker. Her concerns centred on the policeman, general practitioner (GP) and teacher, but also local councillors and the vicar. She suggested that, with everyone knowing each other in small rural communities, difficulties would arise if a victim wanted to report an incident of abuse. Being aware that the perpetrator was friendly, for example, with the local policeman, would mean they had no-one to turn to for support. Celia starts to develop these points and suggests these individuals have power within the local community. She states;

'And I hear anecdotes from service users about attitudes and power and also about abuse by police in their own home life. So that's the problem, it's you know, what position is each individual officer coming from? What's their experience in their family?' (Celia: 6)

Celia develops her argument further by highlighting other powerful figures in a rural community. She says;

'I think the problem is in a small community there is a lot of power invested in a few people and that includes the local police officer, so if you get a good one that's great, and it'll have a huge effect. If you get someone who stands on their high horse and won't take their hats off, like I've heard of two women in a rural village, they don't relax; they don't become part of the community. That creates a barrier and there are already barriers there because whoever's pouring the tea at the meeting is your sister in law....so there's a lot of power, there's a lot of power in the vicar in the local councillors and that sort of thing. And if they're a bit iffy that's going to make a difference. If they're good it's also going to make a difference'. (Celia: 11)

And finally Celia gives a real life example which underpins her argument;

'I know one case, a few months ago, where two police officers go out to, you know, a reasonably well to do isolated house and arrested the perpetrator, but then he was released without charge and yet, you know, his child is now wetting the bed...it's in an isolated place and when he gets drunk that's it, he's off on one. But is she likely to report again? And why not, why was that just left there? Because this man has a certain amount of standing but not a lot, but you know. But I wonder if they've got a rural connection where they were at school together. So they can't believe it of this chap, because they've got to get over that barrier of believing'. (Celia: 12)

Underpinning Celia's perception was a real life example from one of the victims who stated;

'My husband was known as kind of the pillar of the community, someone who was

lovely and who would help anyone, who loved his family, who was a real family man, you know, all that'. (Cindy: 6)

These perceptions expressed by providers, of where power lies in rural communities, reflect studies undertaken by Little (2002) and Woods (1997, 2006, 2011). The impact this can have on victims of domestic violence is substantial and taken alongside the lack of services, isolation, distance and time, leads to the emergence of clear differences in the experiences of victims in rural and urban areas. Another aspect of rural life, and especially in more intermediate and extreme rural areas, is the mistrust of outsiders. This can be difficult for service providers working within these communities as it may take a long time to become accepted. As Gloria explains;

'....they seem to be very mistrusting of outsiders. You've really got to go out of your way to prove yourself. I mean I've been in Northumberland what four years now and I'm still trying to open doors'. (Gloria: 7)

Gloria continues by giving an example of how to be accepted. She says;

'Because I would have known somebody's Auntie Florrie who knew his Uncle Joe and you're in'. (Gloria: 7)

As one interviewee said in relation to domestic violence in rural areas 'the experience is the same, but the support differs.' Evidence suggests that the experience does differ especially in the remote rural areas.

Attitudes and Culture

This section explores agency representatives' views and general perceptions of attitudes and culture associated with men and the way they view females and the division of gender roles within society. The patriarchal nature of society is one in which the male is seen as the head of the family or household; anything else is seen by fellow males as a sign of weakness which ultimately reflects upon their masculinity (Alston 1995, Braithwaite 1994, Campbell and Phillips 1997, Hughes 1997, Radford

and Cappel 2003, Rawsthorne 2008, Websdale 1995). These views have become ingrained within society and are seen in many quarters as the cultural norm.

Therefore, this section will highlight how these attitudes and culture are portrayed in rural Northumberland. Subsequently, the section is broken down into three themed areas. These are patriarchy, attitudes and cultural differences.

A majority of agency representatives expressed the opinion that the traditional way of life within rural areas is based on the patriarchal structure of men being at the head of the household. This enforces the dominant male stereotype of work and going to the pub while the woman stays at home, cooks and looks after the children (Alston 1995, Braithwaite 1994, Campbell and Phillips 1997, Rawsthorne 2008). This has been, and to a certain extent remains the case, in many instances throughout the country; certainly there are those who argue that it is still predominantly the case in rural Northumberland.

So what is it that makes Northumberland different? These differences, interviewees suggest, contrast sharply with the urban areas of Newcastle and Gateshead which border some parts of rural Northumberland. The beliefs and values of males in rural Northumberland are considered to be stuck in the 1970s. This has never changed and has become an accepted part of life. This traditional way of life, it is suggested, can also mean a limited choice for women who may not have the same opportunities for access to different forms of social activities as their urban counterparts. Amy starts to bring some of these points together as she states;

'I think there are attitudes in Northumberland which make it different to the likes of Newcastle and Gateshead and even Sunderland. Because there is a level of acceptance.....' (Amy: 6)

Amy continues by stating that beliefs and values across Northumberland in her opinion are behind the rest of the country;

'I think beliefs and values across Northumberland...generally might be several years, decades, behind than those of other parts of the country. So behaviour that is

generally accepted here towards women might not be accepted elsewhere in the country, where it might have been 20 years ago. Women do seem to be regarded as part of a man's belongings up here... (Amy: 16)

The underlying message is that women know their position and accept their role within the family unit. The data also suggests that it is still accepted that a husband has the right to give his wife 'a clip around the ear' if she steps out of line from the patriarchal norm. However, this tradition is also underpinned by the mind set of older women, who, when confided in by their daughters that they are suffering abuse, are given the answer 'you've made your bed lie on it' (Hoff 1990, Murray 2008) as Gloria explains;

'I mean, I had one woman who was married to a farmer and she went to her mother for help and her mother said you've made your bed lie on it. What do you do with that? Probably her mother had suffered the same thing for the last 30 years...it's normal, this is life'. (Gloria: 12)

Celia and Barbara develop these arguments further by saying;

'...men brought up in sort of upper class traditional roles still go to single sex schools although usually there's boarding schools. But there's usually in the sixth form there's women. So they are slightly better but they still have this very traditional type of humour which is rather school boyish and smutty. And I think actually the younger working class man, although he...if he can stay on the straight and narrow if you see what I mean? He's actually much more open to, to women, to his female counterparts being equal'. (Celia: 2)

The class theme is expanded on by Barbara who specifically draws on her own experience of being brought up in a mining family;

'...there's a historic thing of the role of the woman within the home with the children, what have you. That....I mean I have some experience of that because I grew up in a coalfield area, and it was very much the men worked and the woman stayed at home.

And there was...there was a lot of that kinda attitude still prevails within I think the coalfield area'. (Barbara: 2)

The attitudes depicted towards women in rural Northumberland are further underpinned in terms of how they are perceived by men. This revolves around derogatory remarks and names for females, and generally the disrespectful way in which women are spoken about. Stakeholders, mainly service providers, feel that these remarks differ from attitudes in urban areas. These remarks are related to women belonging to, or being the possession of, the male. As one interviewee said;

'...attitudes towards women differ in rural areas....How can I put this? A bit more unga unga'. (Hannah: 1)

She continues;

'The way they talk about women. I heard some derogatory remarks in North Shields and things cos I used to live there. But up here they're called beasts, and I heard somebody say....I mean that is absolutely disgusting...and captures. Well that shocked me when I heard that one.....Domestic abuse up here is very closed, and women don't talk about it. There's a hell of a lot, but it's accepted because it's part of life'. (Hannah: 2)

For many years the industrial base of Northumberland had been built around heavy industry such as coal mining, fishing and construction. These industries were the bedrock of employment throughout Northumberland. Now there are no deep coal mines in the county and the fishing and construction industry have downsized over the years. People have become more mobile and de-population has happened in some areas (Cloke 2003, Hodge and Monk 2004). This has meant the expectation that a son would follow his father and grandfather into one of these industries and have a job for life has all but disappeared.

In more recent years farming has also spiralled into decline with the loss of employment (Marsden, Lowe and Whitmore 1990), and a cultural shift in the role of

the farmer and the farmer's partner. Many farmers in Northumberland have opened up coffee and farm shops as a way of subsidising lost income from the land. This change has led to a more prominent role being played by the female partner in the development of the retail side of the business. Therefore, the role of the male as main or sole bread winner has become, in many cases, a thing of the past. Many more women now work and in some cases have become the main bread winner. These changes in employment are what I have described as the de-industrialisation of the county. The workforce of a generation ago has changed beyond recognition, especially in terms of employment with the deep coal mining, fishing and engineering industries.

Historically, the nature of male and female relationships, the cultural make up of the County and its patriarchal structure saw men using physical force to chastise their female partner and reinforce their masculinity, as Larry states;

'I think it has been, for a long number of years, socially acceptable that if the wife got lippy, or the partner got lippy, that a cuff or a slap was knowingly expected. There was an element of weakness seen in the man that, if he didn't administer that chastisement in that manner'. (Larry: 2)

Michael develops the links between rural occupations and unspoken local traditions;

'If we take it that they're predominately going to be agriculturally based type communities, I think that unspoken local tradition that you do things within the family. That used to be, I think, the case in my community as well, that the tradition of battering the wife on a Friday night when you got home from the pub was accepted, but now it's become less'. (Michael: 2)

Cultural differences centre on farming communities and those ex-mining areas. The farming culture takes us back to the isolation of farm buildings and lack of access to alternative lifestyles. Market day has also become a traditional part of farming culture. Some see this as an opportunity to indulge in drinking and getting drunk, which can have repercussions for the rest of the family. Within the ex-mining

communities, whilst the patriarchal nature of family life is still prevalent, some of these barriers were broken during the miners strike of the 1980s where women played a dominant role within their communities.

Amy locates the argument to a specific area of Northumberland and how the husband controls every aspect within the marital relationship;

'These isolated women tend to come from the Tynedale area, who thought that living on a farm, for example, with comparatively affluent background and husband, left them just as isolated and vulnerable as somebody in a different situation, because everything was channelled through the husband. He had total control of everything and she couldn't go against him because society would have turned against her, at whatever level they lived'. (Amy: 16)

The agricultural theme is raised again by Ingrid who gives an example of how market day can lead to violence and cut across different classes.

'I've been told that, particularly market day, and the tradition of farmer's coming into market, getting drunk and going home and the family suffered the consequences...It doesn't particularly happen to the group and I think that people's assumptions need to be broken down, that it only happens to people of a certain class or a certain type or whatever'. (Ingrid: 7)

Barbara also reflects on the disappearance of the mining communities and the effects on the attitude towards women;

'...even within the farming community women have always had a role to play, in terms of you know, managing how the farm goes on what have you. Whereas, you don't have that, you know, when you have miners, miners work at the pits women don't and can't. So I think it's more clear cut...from my generation kinda down over I think these long established traditions have been eroded slightly, whether they're would have been anyway I don't know, but I think the closure of the pits facilitated that. I think the last miners' strike which was a very significant strike. I

think women, a lot of women came to the fore even in the mining villages, because a lot of the women had to feed and clothe husbands, children on absolutely no money... (Barbara: 3)

Michael argues that there is no clear distinction between rural and urban cultures, but there was between different industries;

'...we don't have that clear cultural distinction between rural and urban. Particularly Wansbeck used to have local mining, and fisher folk they call it, and again there is a clear cultural difference between those and even within the group itself. The fisher people down on the east side didn't mix with the mining communities, but as regards women I don't see this being too much of a distinction anymore'. (Michael: 1)

Over the past twenty to thirty years the deindustrialisation of the county has taken place and employment opportunities for women in emerging sectors such as tourism have emerged. However, whilst the profile of women may have been raised in this way, evidence suggests that attitudes towards women have remained in the past. There seems to be agreement that some of these attitudes are specific to rural areas. Certainly, the influence these attitudes have on women's experiences of domestic violence impact on their overall experience.

Summary

This chapter has shown how victims' experiences and perceptions of victims' experiences have a distinct rural element to them. Access to services highlights issues of distance and time, availability of public transport and the general lack of specialist services for victims of domestic violence in rural Northumberland. Close knit communities have a dual impact on victims in rural areas. Whilst they can offer support to a victim, because of their parochial nature they can be inward looking, which makes it difficult for victims to disclose abuse. Patriarchy is evident across society, but the findings show that respondents feel that in rural Northumberland is distinctly different from urban areas due mainly to the derogatory terms used to

describe women such as ‘beasts’ and ‘captures’. These differences may not apply to all rural areas, but access to services, transport and the impact of close knit communities will never be far from the surface.

CHAPTER 6

RURAL POLITICS AND THE GOVERNANCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN RURAL NORTHUMBERLAND

Introduction

This chapter examines three main themes; the operational response towards domestic violence from the agency and organisations' perspective; the issues surrounding partnership working and Domestic Violence Forums are explored; and finally the strategic response to domestic violence including governance and the allocation of funding will be addressed.

The chapter also details how the allocation of funding to certain organisations had in Northumberland caused bad feeling among some agency workers and how others were only involved in Forums etc because they were told to be, rather than having a specific remit. Domestic Violence Forums were considered by many as talking shops, with all Forums tending to work to differing agendas. This unease and concern is reflected in the administration of strategic initiatives with concern that ad hoc decisions were being taken and some individuals being excluded from the process. There is a failure to utilise the knowledge and experience of agency workers and a total lack of co-ordination, accountability and objectivity to the strategic response.

Rurality, Two Tier Government and the Response to Domestic Violence

At the time of the research domestic violence services in rural Northumberland were provided by the voluntary sector. The Local Authority response tended to be by representation on Domestic Violence Forums and CDRPs, with Local Authority Community Safety Officers taking the main responsibilities for domestic violence, which is similar to structures identified in previous studies (Gilling 2005, Hughes 2007, Hughes and Rowe 2007, Phillips et al 2002). Moreover, as research suggests, the police are influential and dominant within the decision making process (Crawford 2007, Gilling 2005, Hughes 2007, Smith 2000). Although there was other Local

Authority representation, mainly Housing, it was an unwritten rule that the Community Safety Officers were the key Local Authority representatives. At this particular time there were six Community Safety Officers, all ex police officers, representing the six District Councils who were employed by the County Council as part of the Crime Reduction Division. Therefore, decision making on domestic violence issues, along with other crime related issues, was to be co-ordinated and made at County level. The input of the Community Safety Officers into the decision making process was intended to represent the needs of their District in terms of domestic violence, taking on board the views of both the statutory and the voluntary sector. The intricate decision making process, in terms of representing the interests of the District, County and voluntary sector was a cause for concern regarding co-ordinating a joined up response and reflected the findings by Rogers (2006). These issues are highlighted by Amy, who at the time of the field work was working for the voluntary sector, who draws on her personal experience to make the point;

'I've got Berwick and Alnwick absolutely banging on all the time about the benefits that South East Northumberland get as opposed to what they get, and rather than working with us to accept the rural areas are right up our agenda, they would rather come into a conflict situation...but my feeling is they fostered discontent and conflict because of historical jealousy as to what South East Northumberland gets compared to what they get. Tynedale and the South West is different, there doesn't seem to be the historical jealousies and they certainly are not trying to engineer any sort of conflict situation'. (Amy: 5)

She continues by drawing attention to the conflict between the Districts and County by saying;

'But the Local Authorities themselves are taking positions at the moment against each other and against the County Council'. (Amy: 5)

She concludes by mentioning the political dimension which arises from this type of conflict;

'...there is the political dimension that drives the Local Authorities and statutory agencies in a particular direction...down a particular road. And I think there is a big gap in the political understanding and awareness of domestic violence that may impact on how the statutory agencies are able to deal with it'. (Amy: 13)

The discontent which Amy refers to is, in a way, historical and applies to all service delivery across Northumberland. Because the South East of Northumberland has high levels of deprivation it attracts the majority of funding coming into the County, at the expense, as some see it, of the North and West of the County. The political dimension and taking positions referred to by Amy, were at this particular time being debated at national, regional and local levels. That is, whether two tier authorities should become unitary authorities. The uncertainty created by this proposal remained a constant thread throughout the period of the research. The conflicting nature of two tier government did not go unnoticed by the voluntary sector, as Amy has demonstrated above, but to attract funding there was a fine balancing act which they needed to negotiate as Thelma explains;

'I don't think people realise that, you know you, can't at a District level, there are certain functions at a County level that you know you expect, e.g. County level, children's services, adult services, all that type of stuff. The Districts have the housing but the other stuff is at that level, so you have to influence and engage it if you want to get their budgets, that is what you have to do'. (Thelma: 15)

Any County led response means that the Districts also need to be represented. This leads to enlarged meetings where a consensus of opinion or decision making can be fraught as all interests need to be accommodated. But, ideally Abrar (2000) suggests meetings should be kept to a manageable size. From a County perspective it may also mean that before a decision can be ratified it must go through the committee stage of Council (Hall and Whyte 2003, Welsh 2008). This time consuming bureaucratic exercise makes a spontaneous response somewhat grind to a halt in the sands of bureaucracy. Here Oliver raises the issue of District and County infighting and reflects on the difference with a unitary authority. He states;

'But certainly, always in Northumberland, you always had the problem, there was just so many around the table, it would never really get anywhere... Well it's the nature of the two-tier governing point because the Districts will always be fighting against the County....I would say the two-tier is - which is why when the descriptions came out for regional government, a third tier - blimey, we'll never get anything done. Yeah, and coming to Newcastle you see the difference of a unitary authority...' (Oliver: 11)

He continues by highlighting the problem of decision making;

'...you know how Local Authorities are run, nobody could ever make a decision...oh I have to take that back to committee and therefore it just dragged on...' (Oliver: 8)

These different objectives of District and County also left partners apprehensive about who was responsible for co-ordinating a joined up response and how this would be implemented. This apprehension led to a feeling that there was a certain reliance on the voluntary sector for delivery; especially as they provided the only specific domestic violence services in Northumberland. Those dealing with domestic violence from a Local Authority perspective were not specialist workers and, as with most of their voluntary sector counterparts, domestic violence was just another part of their everyday job which mirrors research by Hague et al (1996). In addition, partners needed to recognise their differences and working together for the benefit of the community. David makes this point but again raises the issue of the size of the county and the different aims and objectives of District and County. David says that;

'It's all about everybody working together. I mean the Northumberland situation is more complicated than anywhere else just because of the huge geography of it and the fact you have three Local Authorities....So you have got these three different organisations who have all got links but have got slightly different aims and objectives'. (David: 13/14)

However, Nina was one who did not think that the two-tier system was such a big problem as it was made out to be. However, the following quote by Nina highlights the difference between theory and practice;

'I think I personally don't think the two-tier thing, this two-tier authority is the massive, massive pitfall. I think again, because Northumberland is such a large area, it's big enough that you've got three distinct separate geographical divisions in there that are all trying to do their own thing, so I would say that having people spread so far apart, and with the different needs of those areas, is the biggest stumbling block to try and get a view in the same place. I don't think having the County and the District is hugely a problem in...if you read the Local Government Authority guidance it's saying we know we've left the County out but it can be involved, it's just we didn't put it in because that would scupper all the single Districts, then so it's not saying this isn't possible, it's just saying use your discretion a little bit'. (Nina: 9)

The contradiction of Nina's argument is that whilst saying there is not a problem she then goes on to say there is but you have to work around this. Working together to solve problems is recognised as part of partnership working (Crawford 1998b, Crawford and Jones 1996, Sampson et al 1988), but partners need to accept the problem is there so they can work towards rectifying it. Oliver explains how these problems can be worked through whether in the rural or urban part of the County, but it is dependent on having the correct partners around the table. Oliver says that;

'I mean we're talking about rural domestic violence, you always get, as you know, in the County scenario, there's always the accusation that all the resources will get stuck to this - the urban area. Whereas, that was never the case because if you put in place, it doesn't matter where it is, and you get the right connections, it'll work, whether it's in Blyth, whether it's Allendale, but if you get the right connections and you get the right model set up'. (Oliver: 8/9)

Another issue which showed how complications arose due to a two tier system was the introduction of BVPI 225, which applied to the District Councils but not the County Council. Some of the key indicators proved troublesome for two tier Authorities. It was stated that each District would have to produce a directory of services. Bearing in mind the lack of specialist domestic violence services in Northumberland, to produce six directories would have been time consuming for very little gain. However, a small card was produced for each area listing local services.

Then later, as part of the strategic approach, a countywide directory was produced. In relation to adopting a multi-agency strategy, Districts had to either have one of their own or adopt a countywide one which reflected local priorities. Each Local Authority was also expected to have a multi-agency Domestic Violence Forum that met at least four times a year. For two tier authorities this meant there needed to be one in each District (LGA 2005).

In Northumberland that would mean six separate Domestic Violence Forums operating in the County. With the existing three causing many concerns for almost 40% of partners, for that number to be doubled would be counter productive. Although there were other indicators, these examples give a flavour of the difficulties faced by two-tier authorities in meeting the criteria. However, key themes emerging from the data highlight the response to BVPI 225 as an example of conflicting objectives from a Local Authority perspective. For some, BVPI 225 turned into a tick box exercise. For the rural Districts it was perceived as difficult to achieve and therefore the priority became meeting performance indicators, rather than focusing on what victims wanted in their particular area. As Ingrid explains;

'I think it could turn into a ticky box exercise because some of the performance indicator requirements are very difficult to meet for small rural authorities. Particularly the refuge, I mean that's a very difficult one to achieve. And I think that people will just be looking at achieving that target...I think it takes away from the focus on providing services, I think it's just achieving a ticky box...' (Ingrid: 6)

Whilst Thelma admits it is not perfect but it is better than what has gone before. Thelma says that;

'..and I think also the other driver has been BVPI 225. Now, it is not perfect, but it is better than the other one which was all about the number of refuge places and I am not saying that we are still beyond, is it into its second year now'. (Thelma: 16)

However, Hannah thinks that BVPI 225 is the wrong route to take and explains why;

'...we've got to be victim led and not looking at performance indicators and crap like that'. (Hannah: 14)

The difficulties of working within a two tier authority are further complicated by the allocation of funding (Crawford 2007, National Audit Office 2004). The allocation of funding can be a contentious issue as there are always winners and losers, with some organisations feeling they are more deserving than others. The allocation of funding to tackle domestic violence in rural Northumberland has been contentious, which has led to bad feeling and resentment.

However, to begin with an analysis will be undertaken into a funding bid in which two Northumberland Districts, North and West, submitted separate bids for the same pot of money provided by Northern Rock to improve domestic violence services within rural areas. Despite what seems on the surface to be a bad example of partnership working, Phillip, who was one of the leading individuals in this bid, felt within his team partnership working was good, failing to acknowledge that other outside partners should have been involved. Phillip explains;

'It (Northern Rock bid) was an excellent example of partnership working except for the one thing. There was only capacity that happened to be in the Housing Authority that enabled that bid to happen. We have resourced our own team probably more than is typical in certain rural authorities in Northumberland. We had both a Housing options, team a strategic and enabling function and some staff in there and they were able to grasp the opportunity to actually write the bid and co-ordinate it...without...who could have put a bid together'. (Phillip: 11)

Whereas, Eileen recalls that she could not understand how either of the two bids were going to help victims of domestic violence as she explains;

'I mean I was involved in the Northern Rock bid and that was quite frustrating...there was a lot of discussion and not much action for victims in terms of what...service was going to be provided.....There was a lot of infighting and I couldn't tell how it was going to help the victims'. (Eileen: 4/5)

Neither of the two bids was successful and caused bad feeling among some within the two different partnerships. Funding has been found to be a problem for the voluntary sector agencies in terms of employing and retaining staff (Robinson, Hudson and Brookman 2008, Welsh 2008). On this issue Amy offers up a solution to this on-going problem. She argues that;

'They (statutory agencies) should set aside funds from their mainstream budgets to fund domestic violence services because essentially what happened is it's been left in the lap of the voluntary sector for better or worse, some good some not good unregulated, unaccountable just very hit and miss'. (Amy 4)

The point raised by Amy is developed further by Hannah who says;

'....with funding people get disillusioned if they're worrying where the money's coming from, their salary.....there's some people out there.....you've got to provide that support, you've got to recognise the work the workers do and make sure they're not going to be burned out within three years or terrified they're not going to get their funding anymore. Mainstream would take that all away'. (Hannah: 14)

The problem arises because of the two-tier model of government. There is ambiguity as to whether the Districts or the County should be responsible for funding different projects. As we have seen from the evidence presented, a two-tier model of government has caused difficulties in addressing domestic violence within Northumberland. The next section looks at Domestic Violence Forums and agency representatives' views on what are the objectives of the Forums, membership, partnership working and also the effects of a two-tier authority.

Domestic Violence Forums: Multi Agency Working

The previous section has outlined the difficulties encountered in a partnership approach to tackling domestic violence in rural Northumberland. This section focuses on Domestic Violence Forums which in essence, research suggests, are an opportunity for both statutory and voluntary sector agencies to come together to tackle the issue of

domestic violence in their area (Crawford 1998b, Crawford and Jones 1996, Sampson et al 1988). At the time of the research there were three Domestic Violence Forums operating in Northumberland, one in the North, one in the West and the other in the South East. There was also a countywide group set up during the research. (See below) Having three separate Domestic Violence Forums raised many issues for those agency representatives who were interviewed. The issues centre on leadership, co-ordination, membership and the role of a Domestic Violence Forum. In terms of leadership the police took the lead role in chairing all three Forums when they were set up; at a level no lower than Inspector. Oliver, a Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO) for the police, explains how his role was to be actively involved in the Forums;

'Part of my duties at that time (1998/99), and they'd come from a few years prior to me getting the post, we had what you'd call these Domestic Violence Forums. So the purpose with those was a multi-agency partnership to meet and discuss issues within domestic violence. So part of my role was to go to those Forums and represent Community Safety and the police. So there were three at the time, one of which was Tynedale, one which was South East Northumberland and the other was North Northumberland. Now these were chaired by - usually it was a Chief Inspector, but I went to represent Community Safety'. (Oliver: 2)

The initial attempts to establish Domestic Violence Forums, led by the police, were fraught with difficulties, and as research suggests there seemed a reluctance for people to join (Byrne and Pease 2008, Crawford 2007, Hughes 2007, Phillips et al 2002, Welsh 2008) and there was also concern at what level the membership operated at in their own organisation as Oliver goes on to explain;

'...I could reel off countless attempts to get the right people round the table, but maybe it was just partnership fatigue. You know, there were other projects that I was involved in and trying to address that and it never happened'. (Oliver: 23/24)

Partners from the voluntary and statutory sector who were involved at the time felt that the police gave leadership and direction which ebbed away once they stood down

from chairing the Forums. In fact there was a period when none of the Forums were functioning, and Freda draws attention to this by stating;

‘The absence of a Forum tells you a lot about a community’s prioritisation of problems’. (Freda: 8)

Whilst the police were still involved in the Forums they worked closely with Women’s Aid; but once Women’s Aid ceased to exist in Northumberland the Forums stopped functioning on a regular basis. The Forums started up again due to concern of agencies that there was no co-ordinated response to domestic violence. So for example in the North of the County the Forum started to meet again as Larry explains;

‘So I sounded out a few people and said what did they feel about getting the Forum back up and running. We looked at various bits and pieces and documentation that were floating about at the time, and we had an event and invited as many people along as we could. And from there the Forum rose again in a slightly different style because I think we made a conscious decision than that the Forum wasn’t going to be just a talking shop and an information share. But it had to fill all the gaps we’ve identified that you had to look and kind of try and address them’. (Larry: 6)

The West however seemed to be more pro-active again due to police involvement as Renee explains;

‘The one in Hexham initially was actually very good because the officer that was tasked to run it really, really wanted to do it. It was not a case of ‘ah’ I have to run a Domestic Violence Forum, I’ve got to, he actually wanted to do it. He had come from Sunderland and had worked really closely with Women’s Aid and other organisations in that area.... but he had lots of knowledge and also he was willing to listen and willing to learn about what the reality was for women. He also was not interested in taking on the glory for the police either’. (Renee: 6)

Renee goes on to say that the Forums worked better if the main core of the membership consisted of practitioners;

'There was always talk about getting people who have got no committee decisions and what have you but in actual fact, they worked better as a practitioner Forum where people could actually meet and find out who each other were.' (Renee: 6)

Furthermore Renee gives an example of how partners started to work together, and a further example of the pitfalls of closer partnership working as she explains;

'They did not have two heads, they were not scary and we were actually all on the same side basically and would all work together and that was when the forum seemed to work the best. When we started trying to do things, they were actually usually less good in some ways because they then would go off very much half cocked, you know, this is what we want. Like for instance, the South East Northumberland one did a campaign which cost a lot of money and they used posters and little cards which were just not, it had not been thought through. There was far too much writing on them. Whenever I sat with a client somewhere where one of these posters were, I would say, what does that say to you, and they would say a man and a woman dancing. Because they were so stylised they had actually lost any meaning so because they were, again trying to be much more, well we will just take the top people, they actually were not listening to what other people were saying....But there was always too much insight and I think we were fighting between different personalities. And you would get one strong personality, very much dominant....' (Renee: 6/7/8)

Unease regarding lack of co-ordination centred on the three Forums having no common terms of reference, action plans etc., which are essential for a productive partnership (Hague 2000). Different Forums had different priorities, mainly due to the two tier local government structure, resulting in conflicting objectives between District and County. This caused confusion and the standards were different as Dawn explains;

'...all three of them the standards of them differs greatly....where I have been to others in the East for example where it becomes a moaning whinging shop. So that's not very positive and I feel as though I've wasted three hours of my life sitting there. I think there's problems in the West and the East in that there is nobody to chair these

meetings...’ (Dawn: 4)

Moreover, Nina also emphasises this point by saying that;

‘I think the focus of the three are different. I think just now, the South East Forum is the most together and the most focussed, and I think the most functional just now. The one in the North tends to be smaller and again is quite focused but sometimes because of the membership it will obviously screen priorities, if there’s more council people, then that’s going to be more of an issue - Tynedale, I think there’s a lot more touchy feely...and I think that has an impact on the direction’. (Nina: 8)

Whereas Wilma brings other issues into the equation as to why the three Forums have different aims and objectives. For Wilma the issues concern different personalities being involved, and the distance of service provision also plays a part as she explains.

‘Well, because you have three different Domestic Abuse Forums for a start. Again we have got lots of different personalities involved in the process so trying to manage that. Geographically, the distance for providing services, for providing refuge, for providing counselling, for providing just any support service to the victims is very difficult. I think you have got some very good services in Northumberland, 608030 you know, or CEASE 24, really good services, but again geographically it is huge and three different councils for three different areas, it is just conflicting priorities’. (Wilma: 14)

For Michael the Forums should continue to exist but with similar terms of reference and one person to co-ordinate between the three, as he explains;

‘...I think the three should still exist and they should have similar terms of reference and a means of co-ordinating their actions and activities, which in the main should come through representation of the Criminal Justice Support Group on domestic violence. There’s no need to create another large Forum if that structure exists’. (Michael: 4)

But for this to happen, Gloria argues that individuals should not be so precious about their specific roles and everyone should work together to achieve positive outcomes. She says;

'But they're not as proactive really as I would like to see them...I think there is a lot of preciousness about everybody with their own little bit of territory and their own area of responsibility instead of just dropping the barriers and throwing your expertise into the pot and getting something done'. (Gloria: 6)

Fluctuating membership of the Forums can be related to domestic violence being an add-on to the day job of many partners (Hague et al 1996); thus resulting in Forum meetings not being a priority. Also research supports the theory that a lack of resources can mean Forums are limited as to what they can achieve (Crawford and Lister 2004, Hague, Malos and Deer 1996, Hall and Whyte 2003, Walton 2006). Furthermore, studies have shown that ad hoc membership arrangements can mean many individuals who attend are not in a position to make a decision regarding their organisation (Hall and Whyte 2003, Welsh 2008). The Forum membership also reflects the lack of specialised domestic violence services operating in Northumberland, which, other than the criminal justice agencies, are drawn from the voluntary sector organisations. Ingrid explains that many attending the Forums have little influence on strategy. She says that;

'I think the Forum, the problem that the Forum's got is that the people who attend the Forum are people who deal - are more operational staff - and therefore they're dealing with things on a day to day basis and haven't got much influence on strategy'. (Ingrid: 2)

She continues;

'I think the Forums are very good for networking, introducing people to what other people do, what their roles are. Giving people an insight into how other agencies can help, and help them..... So you can more or less expect there to be a representative from an agency to be there, Social Services, Local Authority, Probation and I don't

think we've achieved that yet. I think things are just too fluid. People think it's something that they probably think they should attend and they'll just fit in if they can. Whereas, I think what we're looking for is people making a definite obligation to attend'. (Ingrid: 2)

Membership was also a concern for Michael who states;

'As with any partnership, unless there's clear roles, responsibilities and understanding of those by partners, people can walk away and just ignore what we've agreed to. You need the right level of representation, people who are committed....Not someone who's going to come along, go away back to their own organisation, come back a few months later and say I'm sorry, can't do it. It needs to be driven, it needs to be supported and in particular it needs to be accepted as part of the day job of all the organisations involved'. (Michael: 5)

Joan also has concerns regarding membership of the Forums and how information is distributed, she states;

'Because they're not contacting the key agencies; when they are contacting the key agencies they may be contacting the wrong person in that key agency. They're not addressing the issues that domestic violence actually brings about. I just think they just need to have an overhaul of it all and make sure people are getting the minutes, and are up to date with it, and are continually invited....' (Joan: 5)

Membership (having the right people at the meeting), notification of meetings and circulation of minutes is crucial for a co-ordinated response, but difficulties arise if there are tensions with some partners being excluded (Crawford and Jones 1995).

Kirsty, a front line worker was oblivious as to the existence of the Forums;

'I don't know of them. I haven't been told about them. I don't know where they are....If they have played a positive role it's nothing that I know about.....so it can't be that big a role that they have played otherwise I think that it would have filtered down'. (Kirsty: 4)

However, Larry argues that the Forums have focused minds and helped assist in a co-ordinated response;

'I think the Forum for us is certainly good, it's certainly been a positive thing and it's certainly helped focus the Borough Council's mind, it's certainly helped focus the CDRPs mind and inform the domestic violence abuse strategy'. (Larry: 6)

Opinion is divided as to the exact role and purpose of a Domestic Violence Forum (ACPO 2004, Dominy and Radford 1996, Rogers 2006). Evidence suggests that Forums can become inactive talking shops (Crawford 1998b, Hague 2000, Hague, Mullender and Aris 2003, Skinns 2005, Welsh 2008), which subsequently means they are not seen as a pro-active decision making body. Others see Forum meetings as an opportunity to network and find out more about other local and countywide services. This awareness raising at a Forum level, highlighted by the Home Office in 2004(a), underpins the general acceptance by partners that they are not good at advertising and raising awareness of their services, as Gloria points out;

'No, no there's not.' (awareness of services)...We're really, really bad at advertising or promoting our services for some reason.....it was a clique, if I had known what was out there to help me I wouldn't have stayed with him as long'. (Gloria: 11)

Domestic Violence Forums should be the main driving force in addressing policy, provision, and improving the response for victims (ACPO 2004, Dominy and Radford 1996, Hague 2000, Rogers 2006) and, as Phillip explains, unless there are individual's attending the Forums, wanting to shape the agenda, then they tend to become talking shops. Phillip states that;

'There is a risk, that without dynamic individuals around the table, that they could become talking shops. I am not saying talking shops are not useful, actually they are and I think a lot of policies that have been developed by organisations have been informed by the Forum discussion. It is the ability of the Forum itself to actually move things on, it depends very much on it having a resource or not'. (Phillip: 8)

The point raised by Phillip in relation to policy is also emphasised by Amy who sees the Forums as a policy making body as she explains;

'...they (Forums) could be a vehicle for translating policy into action for engaging all the partners to do something positive on a local level...' (Amy: 2)

Furthermore, Pauline is uncomfortable with using the phrase 'talking shop' to describe the Forums, but expresses concern that in the past Forums have lost momentum. She states;

'Talking shop isn't just a dirty word, it can be very helpful but what happened was is the people that came in....nothing happened and nothing happened for a few years and all the good work and all the good relationships and partnerships that were already there, they fell apart because there was nothing to keep them together. It was very hard to keep things together in that situation....' (Pauline: 11/12)

Oliver draws on his personal experience of the Forums to show how they were allowed to develop into talking shops and how the fluctuating membership played a part in this process. Oliver states that;

'...I tried running some Forums. You would get different people turning up at different times, the usual scenario with the - you'd have around the room and people would say 'oh can I just say, I am here for the first time and have just come to have a look, and I'm not sure if I'll ever come again'. And you think, well why are you here man.? And so it didn't have the right people'. (Oliver: 6)

However, for Dawn the Forums were seen as an opportunity to network and to identify people who could help her in her everyday job as she explains;

'Basically, what I wanted from those Forums initially was who can help me do my job and what I can get out of everybody and what can they provide for us to deal with these victims? If I need someone to be re-housed immediately, who can provide that accommodation?' (Dawn: 4)

Evidence is patchy as to how effective the Forums were in tackling domestic violence in Northumberland. The lack of agreed objectives between the three Forums did not bode well for a coordinated response to the issue. Responsibility and continued momentum for the Forums seems to have come from the police, with reluctance on the part of others to share responsibility, to make the Forums a pro-active partnership.

Domestic Violence Co-ordinators

At the time of the research there was a part-time Domestic Violence Co-ordinator who was based in a police station in the South East of the county. The Co-ordinator was a member of all three Forums and was also part of the strategic group which was set up during the period of the research. However, there was some concern as to the role the Co-ordinator played within the strategic group (Hague et al 1996) as Victoria explains;

'I think the Co-ordinator is getting away a little bit, to just purely being there to co-ordinate meetings. I have seen a bit of a shift over the last few months where I could see where that role is co-ordinating little bit more. I cannot speak for other services but certainly, again, I am using the example of the leaflet. We looked at the leaflet and I got some support and some feedback and she put me in touch with different people and that was fine, that seems to be more like a Co-ordinators role'. (Victoria: 8)

However, Victoria had concerns as how the role of the Co-ordinator was developing and she highlights another example of what she considered as an ever increasing ambiguity with the role the Co-ordinator played. She states that;

'I felt that..I did raise that I felt that the Co-ordinator was in the meeting and they weren't playing an active part. She was concentrating on taking the minutes and I know that the minutes were quite detailed and I thought she had a lot to contribute....and that was taken onboard, and I think I have suggested some admin support to the group and I have asked them to look into that and to be reshuffled so she is freed up. I did actually suggest, I did put her forward as chairing the

meeting....I only put that forward by e-mail so I do not know what the response was... ’ (Victoria: 10/11)

However, in contrast the Co-ordinator had a different view of her role;

‘My role is more strategic. I don’t deal with victims on a one to one basis. That is the role of the police officers. So by and large, my role is to do with strategy and four CDRPs’. (Nina: 5)

A solution to the conflicting role of the Co-ordinator is picked up by Phillip who felt there should be a network of Co-ordinators which would mean a shared workload and better outcomes for both victim and service providers. Phillip states that;

‘I think a network of Domestic Violence Co-ordinators, I think core funded people whose job it is to identify gaps in service provision, good practice, share knowledge, share expertise, nurture along agencies and organisations who should be responsible for addressing domestic violence and making more effective use of resources like currently available e.g. there was £70,000 grant coming out of the Home Office. I am not convinced that that is meeting the best needs of victims of domestic violence. This is primarily I think because the people responsible for administering that had no idea really on the best way to tackle the issue because they are not...domestic violence is part of their remit, it is a specialist area...’ (Phillip: 18)

The role of the Co-ordinator was ambiguous and because of the Local Authority boundaries their work became blurred as Wilma explains;

‘I think that does cause issues for work (LA boundaries), for instance with Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators. I know there are three different people who identify with the Co-ordinator, but there isn’t an acting Northumberland Co-ordinator as there is in every unitary area...it’s like, who do I ring in Northumberland? There is not one single point of contact. So I think that causes some issues.....’ (Wilma: 15)

The role of Co-ordinators is further explored by Pauline, she maintains that whilst it is

all very well having a Co-ordinator, it needs to be a full-time post, because if it is not then the person will not be able to cope. Pauline explains that;

‘....but it depends what else was going to be thrown at this person (Domestic Violence Co-ordinator). There can only be so much done. If they are actually the person that is doing this role, the main part of the role would be finding out what is out there and keeping it updated and that could be a full-time job, but also being available so when people phone, you can say ‘yep’ there is an organisation here, I have just heard about them or there is a group running there...’ (Pauline: 21)

Indications are that there is confusion as to the role of the Co-ordinator which is not helped by the having a two tier Authority. More of a concern is that the Co-ordinator is responsible for minute taking at a strategic level, which begs the question, are they just the Co-ordinator in name. Research suggests this may have come about because of the male patriarchal dominance in the Local Authorities (Broussine and Fox 2002, Hopton 1999). Whilst Hague et al (1996) recommend Co-ordinators should have administrative support.

The suggestion put forward that there should be a network of Co-ordinators is surely not practical given the concerns expressed regarding roles, responsibilities and a common agenda; and also at that time operating in a two tier authority. However, the suggestion of having one full-time Co-ordinator is more practical, but their role must not include minute taking.

Strategic Response to Domestic Violence in Rural Northumberland

The strategic response to domestic violence within Northumberland can be looked at in two phases. The first phase involved the setting up of the NDVP which was to lead on the strategic response to domestic violence. The second phase originated from the failure of the NDVP and consisted of a County led group of partners who would collectively deliver a strategy which had been put together by a consultancy firm at the bequest of the County Council. Therefore, this section will analyse in depth these two phases, drawing on interviews with key players and other agency representatives

and giving a detailed overview of the development and implementation of the strategic response to domestic violence within Northumberland.

Emergence of the NDVP

The positive aspect of this attempt at a strategic response was the close working relationship between the NDVP and the police, with certain officers being the main driving force behind the project. However, a contributory factor in the failure of the NDVP can be pinpointed to the transfer of those police officers to other positions outside the county. By their own admission the constant changing of police personnel can have a negative impact on their community partnership work. To give an insight into what the Project set out to achieve Oliver, who was involved in the setting up of the Project, gives a brief overview of its objectives, but also hints that the Project was ahead of its time;

‘There was a conscious decision made...at that time for the police to host the Project (NDVP) to move it on even further. And ...the then DCI was very keen, because I think the work that Amy did, not only identified that we needed a joined up strategic approach, but the direction it was advocating was more like a hands on - like what we are operating now, like a MAPPA a multi-agency public protection. See it was quite innovative, it was ahead of its time...’ (Oliver: 4/5)

He continues;

‘So the whole idea was to get this, the multi-agency action teams to actually do something with victims. And so in a sense actually, because it was based on this project down in Wales, but the creation of the Public Protection Units has actually overtaken the Project, so it’s sort of done what the Project wanted to do. So by actually a sort of back door way, it’s got in, and of course, statutory partners have funded that. So lots of the police are now, we have got a PPU...’ (Oliver: 10)

Furthermore, Oliver goes on to summarise how he felt the programme did not become the success that was first envisaged. Oliver states that;

'Well I would say that, looking back, yes, I would say because it was successful and had some good people leading it and it got some money, funding, there was definitely, I felt, jealously against it. Because it achieved in getting money, so yeah, that probably is an element of why it didn't go on that, to greater - well I mean it did go on, when I sort of left it had got them - then went and got the funding from Government Office because I think it impressed Government Office. I think they liked it because here was a body trying to unify all the separate organisations. It was - it was never going to marginalise them or take away their role, but it was just trying to bring like a federation together and co-ordinate it and channel its energy in the right direction, but I suppose there was jealousy that it was just trying to do that and dictate...because anything that was called Northumberland automatically would get the backs up of Districts'. (Oliver: 17/18)

The funding for the Project came from GONE who, as Oliver says, wanted to see a countywide approach to domestic violence which would be driven forward by a steering group which included representation from all the relevant partners. This, again as Oliver states, came in the form of the NDVP. Thelma, (employee of GONE) concurs with Oliver as to how GONE came to fund the project she states;

'Northumberland obviously is a county area with 6 District Authorities and I think because of that, I think it will be fair to say that the Districts have a more difficult time than the unitaries in trying to get a strategic approach. The first lot of funding that certainly, the funding that came to the region and we disseminated out, we tried to do it on a model that had come forward as best practice, as part of the original Reducing Crime Programme. And it was about having a countywide approach. Having a steering group that would bring together health and the police and all these other people and that was what we tried to do in Northumberland under the Northumberland Domestic Violence Project, at the time that Project started in the County.....It was already set up. It was run by Amy she sat in Northumberland County Council, it was a steering group. It had the police on and various other organisations so we thought, alright, here is an organisation that, you know, if you give it to the County, you worry about the political repercussions of the Districts...So you know we sort of went down that route and I think, what we thought we did was

right andbecause of time scales but looking back what we should have done was had a much more consultative approach....we thought the people were already there on board, that the County was there, the Districts were there, the police were there and we thought, it sort of gave that middle of the road approach.....But it didn't really work out for lots of different reasons'. (Thelma: 4/5)

The emergence of the NDVP was a welcome development and initially seen as a strategic partnership approach to tackling domestic violence. However, as we shall see the goodwill was soon to ebb away.

Reasons for the Failure of the NDVP

One of the reasons the Project ran into difficulties was personality issues and also jealousy from certain partners. These personality issues can materialise due to the different cultures and traditions of the agencies (Blagg et al 1998, Burney 2005, Coliandris and Rogers 2008, Crawford 1998b, Crawford 1997, Crawford and Jones 1995, Robinson, Hudson and Brookman 2008, Newburn 2002, Pearson et al 1992, Phillips et al 2002, Rogers 2006, 2004, Sampson et al 1988), which instead of bringing people together, had the opposite effect, as Thelma explains;

'Instead of the Project bringing people together, I think it would be fair to say it drove people apart. But I think what did come out of that, in fairness, when we all worked through it all, and we, you know, suspended the Project because we knew it couldn't have gone a second year because of the way the relationships were, you know, between the woman who ran the Project and the County and the Districts and it just isn't workable and we said to the Project we would not be funding them for a second year'. (Thelma: 6/7)

For service providers the NDVP did little to bring partners together and improve victims' experiences, some such as Pauline, felt the whole thing had been a waste of money.

'I think the NDVP, it was such a huge waste of money and time and for me, it just

knocked domestic violence back in this area so many years, is how I feel about it because things were happening before they set up. As soon as they set up a strategy and to run a Forum, it fell apart, no Forums, no strategy and lots of money thrown at it and I don't know where it went. I feel that is what I get annoyed about. But I am pleased that it is changing again. I am very pleased and I was pleased that the Forums were starting to pick back up but of course, they have changed because it is a few years down the line and I have to (on a personal level) have to adjust to it being different to what they were'. (Pauline: 11/12)

Whereas, for Gloria, the NVDP became a thorn in the side and put up barriers which did little to improve partnership working. In fact, according to Gloria, it led to mistrust among partners. Gloria states that;

'I think the Northumbria or the NDVP has been a thorn in the side. Really I don't think they've enabled anybody to do anything, I think they've really put barriers there. They've got people mistrusting each other, they mistrust then, they are very secretive. It just breeds all this apathy. It really concerns me'. (Gloria: 6)

Eventually GONE withheld funding from the Project, which resulted in staff being made redundant and ultimately led to its demise. But, as Thelma explains, in hindsight it did actually bring the Districts together.

'I think it worked out in the end for whatever reasons because I think, although the Project didn't do what we wanted it to do, it did bring people together in another way'. (Thelma: 8)

She continues;

'It was just too massive to deal with so physically I think, with hindsight you know, the Districts did come together. The next lot of funding that we gave we didn't give to the Project but held back that year, we said to the County right, we will be much more hands on in terms of trying to bring the Districts together and I think it did work.' (Thelma: 9)

However, she concedes that the whole process was not analysed in great detail which subsequently meant that mistrust among partners was allowed to fester. Thelma explains;

'I think if we, putting our hands up, we had done some more ground work, I think we had about two days to prepare the ministerial submission. Now with more experience, we would have said, well you would have to wait. It's come late and we need to look at it properly but we didn't, we were like, well we are going to lose the money...' (Thelma: 5/6)

This shows, in hindsight, GONE realised that mistakes were made and their management of the Project and lack of co-ordination and communication contributed to its demise.

A New Strategic Approach

Following the demise of the NDVP the County Council initiated the formation of a strategic group which would put together a strategy on how domestic violence would be addressed within Northumberland. The group was placed with the Children's Safeguarding Board and chaired by a representative from the board. The strategy on which they were to deliver was not written by the strategic group, but outside consultants, who were based in Sheffield and had little background in domestic violence. Although individuals were consulted, there were many who were not. However, Thelma comments on the process;

'We got somebody in to put together a county wide strategy and she didn't have...she only had a couple of months and I think, she started to do, she didn't get it finished but at least she started to do that and an action plan and I don't know what she said or what she produced was everything everybody wanted'. (Thelma: 12)

The need for a strategic approach had been advocated by the Home Office (2004a) and also Hague (2000). Here Michael explains how long it took to devise a strategy and why a strategy was necessary to drive forward the response to domestic violence;

'Well certainly it's been flagged up for the last six years there was an issue within the Crime and Disorder Strategy. We've just relied upon other agencies to try and develop a strategy that proved productive. We've therefore followed it through and taken the initiative to try and drive something forward, particularly once we were given the statistics showing the situation around Wansbeck'. (Michael: 2)

The strategic group membership, which was similar to those highlighted in previous studies (Gilling 2005, Hughes 2007, Hughes and Rowe 2007, Phillips et al 2002), consisted mainly of those representing the statutory sector and was heavily influenced by the Safeguarding Board, Crime Reduction Division of the County and the police. At the outset there was no representation from the domestic violence services and the group membership consisted of two women, one of which who was the Co-ordinator who was tasked with minute taking. Moreover, as with the Domestic Violence Forums, the strategic group seemed undecided as to what level of membership should be present at meetings and how the strategy was to be implemented, which is fundamental to an informed response (Abrar 2000), as Nina explains:

'I think the partnership working is essential because I don't think domestic violence can be solved by any one agency. I just don't think that's possible. I think the partnership working - the obvious example of that is the strategy, cos there is absolutely no way that could have come together without the consultation of them being drawn together on the action plan and getting all the sort of fairly senior managers from all the different agencies around the table and the funding for the strategy that's required. There's 6 CDRP Co-ordinators to come together and agree that to allow the action plan to go forward. To involving the CDRP's you're involving the courts, the CPS, you're involving voluntary agencies, particularly Councils, the housing sectors and everybody is reading off the same page, so it allows you to have a single direction and all be moving roughly together in the same place. The flip side of that is the pitfall, that you can spend an awful lot of time trying to get all your ducks pointing in the same direction, it just takes one person to go off on a tangent and it's awful lot of work to try and keep everybody, cos we've got a lot of partners, to keep everybody informed, everybody involved, and everybody moving in the same direction'. (Nina: 8/9)

Nina states that by involving the CDRPs the courts and CPS became involved. At the time of the research the courts and the CPS were not represented on any CDRP, but the CPS were represented on the West Domestic Violence Forum. Non representation by certain agencies mirrors findings of previous studies (Byrne and Pease 2008, Crawford 2007, Hughes 2007, Phillips et al 2002). The decision making process was undertaken by the six Community Safety Officers, all male ex police officers, who produced an Action Plan without, according to Nina, involving any other partners, especially those domestic violence projects (Phillips et al 2002). This point is also picked up by Ingrid, who argues that if people do not talk to each other or are not consulted, they will never know the true extent of the problem and how best to deal with it;

'I think that the major problem that we have in Tynedale and probably throughout Northumberland is the scale of the problem. I think that, because different agencies aren't talking to each other - although we're trying - that nobody's got a really good focus or a good picture on what the extent of domestic violence is'. (Ingrid: 6/7)

This point, of not talking to each other, is similar to one raised by Joan who identifies ways in which relevant individuals can be included in the strategic process;

'But it wasn't structured and it wasn't done correctly because they weren't, they weren't targeting the right people. We certainly weren't targeted and we deal with domestic violence 24/7. So I think a group does need to be set up to actually get these partnerships together, and working together, in the right way, and not just bringing everybody together and saying, you know well, here everybody is, network, get on with it. You know they need to be setting meetings up with people...' (Joan: 4)

Kirsty also seems to be addressing the same point when she says that;

'I don't think the people on the ground level are contacted about many things. You know the people who are actually doing the work are not the people who are contacted....They probably don't even know I exist. Yes, I mean, I thoroughly believe that. I don't think they probably think I exist'. (Kirsty: 10)

But according to Nina the strategic group was still having problems identifying relevant agencies and individuals, which seems strange when it is acknowledged that there are very few domestic violence services across Northumberland. However, she states;

'Well, even practitioners aren't aware of all the services that are available. We are still working on that...I mean we're still having partnership conferences and big meetings - does anybody know about this, does anybody know about that, so if we are only beginning to piece it together for ourselves, the victim has got no hope of knowing the scope and the scale of services that are available to them. But hopefully that will be addressed as part of the strategy...' (Nina: 16)

Moreover, Nina has little doubt that things will improve as she states;

'I think it's been very positive. (Strategy) I do think it will revive working like that, that we are going to improve things...' (Nina: 19)

Transparency and Accountability

As with previous attempts at a strategic response there were concerns at the transparency in decision making and the general accountability of the strategic group. A member of the strategic group said that the link with the Domestic Violence Forums, as far as she could see, was non-existent. There was also concern as to how and where decisions were made. Victoria, who was a member of the strategic group, explains;

'At that meeting it was kind of co-facilitated. So that is where I got the idea that it had been Russ Jackson who had been driving it now, he kind of introduced the idea that it was the police who were going to drive it now and so I sensed that first meeting that I got was kind of hand over, as it were. So the first thing I realised was that they didn't have any representation from any of the domestic violence services. And that was one of the first things that we realised we had to act on. So, for me, there has never been an agreement from the group that this is the group, this is the core group'.

(Victoria: 5/6)

Victoria also mentions the lack of decision making powers and a group culture which meant the police were not challenged. She says that;

'...the strategy group haven't got it yet about decision making. I don't know where the decisions are being made and how they are being made, but...I don't know, there is just no clarity....and what I have learnt from behind the scenes is that you don't challenge the police'. (Victoria: 20/23)

Further concerns of Victoria were that the decision making process was outside the main meeting, as she explains;

'I think the partnership working has actually been done outside the strategy group. And it's little pockets, yes, it's pockets and it has gained, it's not co-ordinated'. (Victoria: 15)

Victoria also felt that responsibility for domestic violence was additional to members' everyday jobs, similar to that of the Forums (Hague et al 1996). However, delivery on the actions points was decided at the strategy meetings. These action points involved individuals being assigned an action point and being tasked to go away and form a sub group who would then work towards addressing the action point. These action points included a perpetrators programme, training and models of care. At each strategy meeting those responsible individuals reported back on progress. Whilst these sub-groups were attempting to address the action points there were no further resources available to help in the implementation. How the creation of sub-groups and the strategy group links to existing Forums is explained by Michael;

'I think through the structure that we're now proposing working with the Children's Safeguarding Board, that actions will fall from that, then head out to the Forums and partners that they will be expected to deliver on and feed back in and I think that will change the impetus and the way people engage.....if run properly. They shouldn't be talking shops, they should be similar to the Crime and Disorder Action Teams.

They're there to drive the agenda forward not just to sit and ponder people's navels about what's wrong with the world.....I think the three should still exist and they should have similar terms of reference and a means of co-ordinating their actions in activities, which in the main should come through representation of the Criminal Justice Support Sub-group on domestic violence. There's no need to create another large forum if that structure exists...' (Michael: 4)

As we have seen above there was no standardised terms of reference between the Forums. The sub-groups were acting separately from the Forums and the decision making process of the strategic group was questionable. The impression given by those interviewed is that few lessons had been learnt from the problems associated with the NDVP, there was nothing forthcoming to improve resources for victims and there was a lack of co-ordination in implementation of the action plan.

Summary

As we have seen from the findings the partnership approach to domestic violence is somewhat dysfunctional for many reasons. There is little evidence that victims have benefited from the partnership attempts to address their needs. Contributing to the dysfunctional nature of the partnership approach was the failed Northern Rock bid which led to two Districts competing against each other. Domestic Violence Forums had been inconsistent in their approach with no agreed terms of reference. The impression given was that they were a secondary concern when strategic initiatives were implemented. The strategic approaches also failed to provide lasting change. The NDVP was undermined by conflict, while further attempts to adhere to a strategic approach lacked transparency in decision making processes. Overall, the findings show that, however honourable the attempts were for a partnership response to domestic violence, conflict, lack of leadership and lack of implementation of strategies resulted in very little evidence to show that victims benefited from this process.

CHAPTER 7

THE CRIMINAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Introduction

This chapter examines the combined response by social and criminal justice agencies to domestic violence, drawing specifically on data collated from interviews with relevant stakeholders operating within rural Northumberland. Most importantly the chapter examines how rurality impacts on this response. The chapter then explores the difficulties agencies face in providing adequate service provision and support for victims of domestic violence in Northumberland. To this end the chapter examines the work of the criminal justice agencies, including the police, magistrates and Probation Service. The second part of the chapter examines general service provision and goes on to consider the adequacy of refuge and housing provision in rural Northumberland.

The Criminal Justice Response to Domestic Violence in Rural Northumberland

Police Response

In this section, the views of agency representatives (including the police), to the police response to domestic violence in rural Northumberland will be examined. This analysis will highlight emerging themes identified by stakeholders as to how they have observed and experienced police procedures in relation to domestic violence. This essentially relates to the impact of training and the changing attitudes of the police to domestic violence. This will be interspersed with victims' experiences of police practice.

One of the issues raised by agency representatives, which mirrors past research, is police officers' lack of understanding of the complexities surrounding domestic violence (Dobash and Dobash 1992, Hanmer et al 1989). In the past this has been

addressed by new officers receiving compulsory domestic violence training when they join the force (Home Office 1990a). As we shall see below, the findings show an improvement in younger officers' response to and understanding of domestic violence. However, there are still those who remain sceptical as to whether the training is implemented and used in their everyday work, as Celia explains;

'The police also need a lot more education, they need a lot more joined up thinking, it needs to be much more...commonality in their reactions to abuse...I'm sure some are very willing to do the right thing, but some haven't a clue and don't want to know'.
(Celia: 6)

Freda concurs with Celia regarding officers' attitudes to domestic violence and argues that they suffer from a lack of training. However, Freda fails to distinguish whether existing training has had any impact but argues that;

'The police seem to have their hands tied and have a lack of training and a lack of responsive and receptive attitudes to domestic violence'. (Freda: 8)

The point is further emphasised by Hannah who says;

'They need to know more about domestic violence and how it works, what the implications are.... I know they're hardened to a lot of what goes on. They see things we're hopefully not going to see. But they have to realise, for this woman, that there are all sorts of issues and there's been a lot of conditioning going on and manipulation, so they've got to try and empathise with that'. (Hannah: 9)

Training for police officers has been a long standing issue which emerged during the 1980s (Home Office 1986) and has been an issue which has constantly been highlighted since (Dobash and Dobash 1992, Edwards 1989, Hanmer and Griffiths 2001, Home Office 2000, Plotnikoff and Woolfson 1998). The introduction of training for officers is a welcome development but research suggests negative attitudes still exist; with a small minority who still think domestic violence is a waste of police time and they should not get involved (Bourlet 1990, Loftus 2009). While

police training needs to be addressed, as well as attitudes and values in relation to domestic violence; those interviewed argued that the police also need to address how victims can be referred to relevant agencies, and how to gain a better understanding as to what these agencies can offer. Gloria sums this up as follows;

'It's pretty slow though (referrals from police) because it's still down to the individual officer and how he puts across the information on Victim Support because they can say it quite derogatory sometimes, you know. It's a case, you know, the blue rinse brigade, you know, are just nosey parkers basically. We're hoping and we're trying to get away from that a lot...particularly if new officers come in we're finding the training they're getting now as probationers is starting to bear fruit. Because they're up on the issues attached to domestic violence and again the way they put over our service to the victim is important'. (Gloria: 3)

Closer partnership working would allow the police to become familiar with what organisations offered and pass this information on to victims (Home Office 2000, 1998c, 1990a), which to some degree is happening (Jones, Newburn and Smith 1994, Loftus 2009, Mooney 1993, Walker and McNichol 1994). From a police perspective David describes the current situation regarding training by stating;

'...they all get a training package which myself and my sergeant designed in conjunction with our training department and that is a thorough input...' (David: 8)

He continues;

'.....we also have in development at the moment, which I haven't quite finished yet, a one day domestic violence course for all sergeants just in order to take that training a little bit further, develop their knowledge and develop their skills as far as managing their staff'. (David: 9)

The current situation is a vast improvement on what was available when David first joined the force as he explains;

'I don't remember any training. I mean, I joined in the early 1980s, in 25 years, I don't believe I attended domestic violence training...we do multi-agency training so training goes on outside the organisation as well'. (David: 10)

David's admission that he did not receive, to his knowledge, any domestic violence training in twenty five years highlights how police practice has developed incrementally during this period in relation to domestic violence (Home Office 1986). The changes have been a necessity for improvement in police response (Jones, Newburn and Smith 1994), although entrenched views and attitudes have been found to still exist (Bourlet 1990, Jones, Newburn and Smith 1994, Loftus 2009).

Evidence suggests that police attitudes to domestic violence have changed. The reasons cited for this change are younger officers having a more positive attitude to domestic violence incidents than their more experienced colleagues; often ridiculing their older colleagues for their outdated views on domestic violence (Hoyle 1998). However, older officers can also have a negative influence on their junior colleagues (Bourlet 1990). Larry, a former officer who had served in the force during the 1970s and 1980s, admits that the police were, in the past, poor at dealing with domestic violence and this has been widely recognised over a number of years (Grace 1995, Faragher 1981, Plotnikoff and Woolfson 1998, Radford and Stanko 1991, Richards, Letchford and Stratton 2008, Reiner 1985).

'The police are notoriously bad, or have been in the past notoriously bad at dealing with domestic violence/domestic abuse issues. Rightly or wrongly they seem to treat, or they have in the past, just treated it as another, just another call out'. (Larry: 3)

However, although now retired from the force, but working as a Community Safety Officer, he admits that things improved during his time in the force and continue to do so;

'...definitely improved in the time I've been in the force. I don't think there's any doubt about that'. (Larry: 10)

His sentiments are echoed by Barbara, who is a front line worker with a statutory agency who deals with the police on a regular basis. From her own experience Barbara has seen an improvement in officers' response and attitudes, mainly from the new and younger officers. She says;

'I think it's still an element within the older generation of police officers, it's just a domestic. But I think that attitude is diminishing fast certainly amongst the younger element'. (Barbara: 11/12)

While, justifiably, the police were roundly criticised for their response to domestic violence, there is now a general recognition that things have improved (Heidensohn 2008, Jones et al 1994, Martz and Sararrer 2002). For Ingrid the role of the police in domestic violence incidents is not an easy one, but she has also detected a change in their attitude. She says;

'I think it must be a very hard job to be a police officer because I think you're having to think on your feet and you don't know what situation that you're going to face. But I think things have changed. I think there's definitely a change in attitude'. (Ingrid: 4)

However, Phillip states he has been impressed by the police response to domestic violence for a number of years;

'I have been impressed by the police in Northumbria for a number of years. Even if you could say when individual experiences from individual officers is not always perfect, I certainly think....that when talking to police officers certainly the level we get to talk to, they do have a genuine commitment. They do see it (domestic violence) as a crime...' (Phillip: 12)

Examining Phillip's point further, the main criticism he makes is whilst the police attitude towards domestic violence is not perfect, there has been some positive changes taking place. As evidence shows, the police response to a domestic violence incident can solely be dependant on an individual officer's attitude to the crime. The

masculine nature of the police response is often cited as a reason why victims are reluctant to pursue further action. (Emsely 2008, Heidensohn 1992, Hoyle 1998, Waddington 1991, Young 1991).

However, Nina suggests that the current response in Northumberland is adequate and states;

'Adequate - Yes I do, (Police response). I think there's been a lot of training of front line police officers, that officers should all know how to respond to domestic violence incidents, and I think they do and in the Domestic Violence Unit, the officers that have their own localities so for example, Paul will do North Northumberland, Berwick, Alnwick, Hexham, so there is always...if there is a uniformed police officer who has a query, and thinks I'm not quite sure how to deal with this, there is always a specialist officer for them to contact'. (Nina: 11)

Furthermore, a serving officer also relates to the current situation by saying;

'Whenever, we've had a domestic violence incident the way they come and the way they're recorded would be dealt with pretty urgently. It wouldn't be a case of I'll finish me sandwich and I'll go to that. They would attend immediately and that's the way officers are trained'. (Dawn: 6)

Nina and Dawn highlight the more proactive police approach to domestic violence although research suggests that there is still progress to be made regarding training of officers (Dobash and Dobash 1992, Hanmer and Griffiths 2001). One of those concerns centre around whether the changes at the top are filtering down to those officers who deal with domestic violence incidents (Bourlet 1990, Jones, Newburn and Smith 1994, Loftus 2009). Among the police themselves there is a drive to make sure the proper procedures are adhered to; but there are still issues of concern. Ingrid stresses that sometimes the police just want a conviction and do not seem concerned for the consequences of their actions. She states;

'...I just think that sometimes the police are more keen on a conviction than they are

the victim, or more keen on creating a situation than trying to solve it or just to try and keep it low key. Because after all the children in that family, and the victim, has to return to that property and the neighbours are all aware of what's gone on and it doesn't seem very sensitive'. (Ingrid: 3)

Ingrid's concern that the police are just after a conviction seems justified as David admits that the police need to be proactive, especially with high risk victims, in tackling domestic violence and gives an account of how he envisages this proactive stance;

'I would like to see Domestic Abuse Officers using covert techniques with all kinds of policing tools that they have got, to make sure that the perpetrator goes to jail because that is the best way to safeguard that particular victim'. (David: 15)

However David fails to take into consideration the victim's view, as evidence suggests, that the majority of the time the victim just wants the violence to stop or the perpetrator temporarily removed (Hoyle and Saunders 2000, Mooney 1993). However, other studies show that pro-arrest policies have been welcomed by victims (Kelly 1999, Loftus 2009); but there has been concern from female officers who felt victims may become more vulnerable (Loftus 2009). Another cause for concern is when the police have followed all the right procedures and the case is taken to court, then at the last minute the victim withdraws her statement (Cammiss 2006, Mooney 1993). Service providers can understand the frustration and the amount of paper work this causes the police. However, Hannah suggests that domestic violence within police families can, to a certain extent, play a part in this frustration;

'But I think we've got to tackle issues within the police themselves because...I can understand them been disheartened and disillusioned because they do go out they do take statements and see them retracted. But they've got to be able to tap into support services to support the women to carry on through that'. (Hannah: 8/9)

She continues;

‘....but the attitude from some of them, and there’s domestic violence in the police families as well, a quite high figure of domestic violence. It’s all about power and control. So of course it fits in. And I think part of the problem is if we start raising that, raising the profile and raising awareness, then they’re not only going to have to address the issues in society, they’re going to have to address the issue at home; start looking at themselves; and I think that can be quite scary for people’. (Hannah: 9)

Pauline also shares concern about the withdrawal of statements by victims she says;

‘....I think the police must get very frustrated and I can understand why sometimes. With the police they do not push things as maybe as much as they could because they know it is not going to go anywhere and it is almost; what’s the point? I would not want to sit and do hours of paper work either if I thought, am I going to do it and then it is just going to get kicked out anyway, and it’s not even going to get to court. So I think there is a lot of that kind of attitude as well’. (Pauline: 17)

Pauline’s understanding of the frustration that officers may feel when a victim withdraws their statement at the last minute only reflects the concerns of the police themselves (Cammiss 2006, Mooney 1993). Renee relates to her own experience which underpins the point made by Pauline. Renee describes police practice in this area as ‘patchy’ and her organisation would praise good practice but also criticise bad. However Renee concludes that;

‘....the police were very much, they thought that they were doing a really good job but it did not filter down from the top, right down to those on the ground. It still happens to this day, if you get a good officer, you get a fabulous service. If you get one that is not interested or is possibly an abuser themselves, women get really, really badly treated’. (Renee: 9/10)

The filtering down, which Renee talks about, could also relate to the training of officers. If there is a good officer then they will most probably react in an appropriate

way, whereas the opposite could be true of someone whose attitude to victims is less than sympathetic. Early research showed that police more often than not made 'moral judgements' about whether to arrest or not (McCleod 1983). Whereas others felt they should listen but not interfere (Hanmer and Saunders 1993). The police themselves admit that if a crime has not been committed it is hard to arrest anyone, but will take positive action whenever possible. David a serving officer explains how;

'I mean lets be honest, some domestic violence incidents you cannot take positive action because no crime has been committed but even in those cases, if the officer suspects that either party is in danger, then we always have the option of arresting...take the guy away from the house for several hours, put him in front of a court the next morning. As far as children are concerned, what we always do now is we have got quite a vigorous inspection unit to make sure that it happens or doesn't happen'. (David: 4)

A fellow officer emphasises the point further by saying;

'What we don't want is officers to just go and say 'yeah OK', then I will just take that statement, and just don't bother. What we want is support and persuasion to stay with it'. (Wilma: 8)

Wilma also admits that all calls received may not be logged as domestic violence, which can lead to under reporting an issue which has been highlighted in previous studies (Cook 1997, Fattah 1997, Williams 1997). For example, if the victim's original complaint is not dealt with as domestic violence then they may be reluctant in the future to report. Moreover, if the perpetrator's actions have not been recorded as domestic violence this could have a fundamental impact in future if he is at court for a domestic violence offence, but has no record of previous offences of domestic violence, because they have been wrongly recorded in the past. Wilma emphasises the point by saying;

'All calls were always monitored but you wouldn't necessarily always log them as domestic abuse'. (Wilma: 4)

However, despite over 40% of agency representatives feeling that overall there has been a positive change in the police response to domestic violence, there are still examples of extremely bad practice in the area. Two agency representatives who were interviewed had personal experience of bad practice by officers which had occurred, prior to interview, in the past two years. One interviewee recalled an incident where the police kicked a door down in their response to a domestic violence related call out. The fact that the property was in a small rural area attracted local attention to the family's situation. Ingrid recalls the situation by saying;

'I had a case where I was talking to the perpetrator of the domestic violence, and what they said was the police kicked the door in and they said that they'd knocked and he hadn't answered. Now I think if, I think our service tries to keep the victim focused and I would have thought for the sake of the neighbours and the children maybe that wasn't the best approach by the police; to actually kick the front door in, to draw attention to that family'. (Ingrid: 3)

The other incident was when an officer wanted to give the perpetrator information as to the whereabouts of the victim. Although Joan readily admits that the police have changed for the better in their response to domestic violence, she also acknowledges that there are some officers who are not taking the issue as seriously as their counterparts. She explains;

'My experience up to now is that it has been and I think that the police have moved mountains to ensure that is the case. There are still obviously the one or two policemen we are going to get, and we have had them at the refuge, who will say if a partner turns up at the refuge he only wants to see his kids. You know, what harm is he doing? And we only had that a few weeks ago...so I think, yeah, there is still a lot of awareness to be raised and there are very few Domestic Violence Officers in Northumberland'. (Joan: 6)

Interviews with victims also gave rise to concerns with regard to the police response. In the case of Ella she had called the police out to a violent incident and was told that;

'They said they would board the house up, go back to me mam's and all that, they let him live in the house, over to him and everything...' (Ella: 7)

Another incident recalled by Ella was when she had escaped a particularly violent attack and ran into the street looking for help and eventually arrived at her mothers. She relates;

'... the police come, come in and brave as they are and all that and they booted the door down and hit the streets and everything where he was supposed to have gone; they took him to the hospital and they come and says he'll get done'. (Ella: 12)

Another victim also at first had a negative response when she called the police;

'I felt that the police, I didn't get the response that I should have had'. (Cindy: 4)

Cindy also recalls another occasion when she was not satisfied with the police response. She said;

'What they said was, they could take him away overnight and they would let us know. What they said was they would ring me but I didn't get a phone call or anything'. (Cindy: 13)

However, we shall see later how Cindy found the police response when the PPU was in operation. The evidence shows that there are still reservations regarding police response, although, unsurprisingly the police feel as though their response has improved and is adequate.

Sentencing, Punishment and Community

The following section will draw upon service providers' views of magistrates. These views are related to the service providers' personal experiences, anecdotal evidence and their views on how they perceive magistrates in general. This analysis will reflect issues raised by service providers themselves; these are sentencing, training and how

magistrates are generally perceived.

One of the main concerns for over 35 % of service providers interviewed is the inappropriate sentencing by magistrates; especially after all the work which has gone towards getting a prosecution. Many service providers expressed concern that, of the domestic violence cases which were taken to court, many lead to the perpetrator receiving a conditional discharge. In other cases the perpetrator walked free or at worse received a fine (Cook et al 2004).

Those perpetrators receiving a conditional discharge or fine will not be given, as a condition of sentence, a requirement to attend a Probation run accredited domestic violence programme to tackle their abusive behaviour. Therefore, the reality of the judgement passed down by magistrate's means, in all likelihood, that the perpetrator is free to return to the marital home and in all probability to continue the abuse. As one service provider put it;

*'Well I have been absolutely appalled at the seemingly high level of conditional discharges for clear domestic abuse assaults...again we need zero tolerance'.
(Freda: 10)*

The point made by Freda is further emphasised by Amy who states;

'Magistrates routinely let people walk out the courts in Northumberland, routinely, it's so unusual if a domestic violence victim is given any sort of, sorry the perpetrator, is given any sort of penalty that it makes news'. (Amy: 18)

She continues;

'...there's an open door policy through the courts...they just walk in one door and out the other, so there's no real penalty and that sends out a message that domestic violence is acceptable'. (Amy: 19)

Furthermore, Hannah explains the effect that sentencing has on whether the

perpetrator is required to attend DIVERT and more importantly the effect on the victim. She states;

'They seem to fine. If they're going to do anything they're going to fine. And that's not always appropriate...' (Hannah: 10)

The problem Hannah sees with fining the perpetrator is that if the perpetrator is still living with the victim, then the likelihood is the perpetrator will make the victim pay the fine. Hannah also highlights that the only time the magistrates take into consideration the victim's view is if she asks for the charges to be dropped. Hannah gives the following example from her own experience;

'I've had two women stand up in court and say to the magistrate I don't want him to go on DIVERT. One of them, as soon as she came out, she was crying her heart out because she had sworn on the bible and she lied. Because she wanted him to go on DIVERT but because he got to her she lied in the box. What did they do? They gave him community service. And they say as well, they make the excuse, they can't go on DIVERT because they can't afford it and they got the travelling and have to take time off work; which is absolute crap. So what do they do? They go alright he can't do DIVERT, right give him community service on Friday afternoon rather than DIVERT. What!' (Hannah: 10)

Research has shown that magistrates are more likely to consider probation and a programme for domestic violence, if they sentence at all. However, when confronted with stranger violence they are more likely to consider a custodial sentence (Gilchrist and Blisset 2002). The reason service providers feel that these types of sentences are handed down vary. There was a feeling among approximately a third of those interviewed that magistrates do not take domestic violence seriously; they do not see it as a crime, and they do not understand the complexities of domestic violence; all issues which have been highlighted in other research studies (Buzawa and Buzawa 1991, Cretney and Davis 1997). The following quote from Celia, who at the time of the field work was a front line worker, sums up the complexities faced by magistrates, victims, and perpetrator alike. She says;

'...they (magistrates) actually need educating about the processes, the processes of control particularly. They don't understand that a woman may have been drinking with her husband because that's the way he control's her. So when it says in the paper they've both been drinking...a red rag to a bull. Of course they've been drinking. But he may take her home and rape her with a paper bag over her head because she's so ugly he says, which is something I've come across'. (Celia: 6)

She continues;

'But they don't actually know anything about the processes of abuse, where the perpetrator's coming from. It's not they get drunk and angry or they're angry and get drunk. It's actually the perpetrator has quite often...usually a deep seated physiological problem to do with his mother usually'. (Celia: 6)

Just to underpin how service providers feel about sentencing for domestic violence not being adequate, Barbara draws comparisons with sentencing for a general assault. She states;

'...you almost get far more if you nick someone's money than you do for knocking seven bells out of somebody in a domestic violence case. So I don't think there is enough emphasis and enough weight put on what is a very serious criminal offence'. (Barbara: 13)

She continues;

'....if I took you out of here and punched your lights out, I would get done worse for that, than if you and I were married and I punched your lights out...Because if I did punch your lights out and we weren't married, and punched your lights out the chances of us running into each other again are fairly remote, because I would stay out of your way and you would stay out of mine. If we were married and I did it we have to live together day after day, with that threat hanging over your head. So if a Section 47 assault was perpetrated on somebody you don't know you're never likely to see again. How can that be worse than a Section 47 assault perpetrated on

somebody you live with day in day out all your life? ...So I think emphasis is the wrong way around'. (Barbara: 13)

Not understanding the complexities of domestic violence can lead magistrates to minimize behaviour (Cretney and Davis 1997), minimize the impact on the victim (Cammiss 2006) and fail to see that domestic violence is not an isolated incident (Lewis et al 2001). Approximately a quarter of service providers felt that one way this issue of sentencing could be addressed was through providing domestic violence training to magistrates. However, training would have to dispel the common myths and misconceptions of domestic violence (Morley and Mullender 1994), most notably that the victim is in some way to blame or has contributed to her abuse (Harty et al 2001). For example, the victims' 'nagging' contributed to the abuse she suffered (Edwards 1989). As Gloria demonstrates, there is a feeling among service providers that training is an essential ingredient in addressing the problem; she states;

'I think they need some serious training I really do.....They're so far away from reality it's just crazy you know...' (Gloria: 9)

In the past Northumbria Probation Service has offered and undertaken training with magistrates which has addressed the complex issues of domestic violence. This has included the type of offences to look for which could mean domestic violence could be taking place, for example, the offence of criminal damage. As Eileen, a serving Probation Officer explains, this is not as straight forward as one may think. She also highlights, as Barbara did above, that if the charge was for assaulting someone in the street the sentence would be different than a domestic violence related assault. She says;

'Because what happens at Hexham and South East Northumberland court is that they don't.....you could have an offence of criminal damage which you know is all about domestic violence, and they just get a conditional discharge, and they don't get to interview the offender. So they miss out on the programme'. (DIVERT) (Eileen: 3)

Even though training has taken place, and continues to do so, this is shown not to be

reflected in the magistrates' sentencing practice even though they have a wide variety of sentencing options (Tarling 2006). There is a high probability that magistrates who do attend the training are the ones that have some knowledge on domestic violence and want to learn more. However, there are still magistrates who have no interest and do not attend training events. As Eileen explains;

'We (Probation) keep trying and we do magistrates training. But the problem that you get, the magistrates that are interested turn up. It's the ones that don't, that aren't interested and don't turn up'. (Eileen: 8)

Subsequently, they will continue their bad practice in sentencing. Joan highlights the need for magistrates to understand how a victim may react in the witness box; she may become distressed for example. Rather than the magistrates think there is something wrong with her, they need to understand she is acting like this because of the abuse she has had to endure from the perpetrator. Joan explains;

'You need to understand domestic violence. You need to understand that when they've got a woman in the witness box, she's going to be hysterical; she's going to be upset. That doesn't mean that she's, she's mad.....and you can't blame him for doing what he's done. You need a lot of education and understanding'. (Joan: 7)

A Probation Officer who was interviewed was of the opinion that sentencing in Newcastle and Gateshead was harsher than Northumberland. The variation in sentencing by city magistrates and rural magistrates is one which needs to be developed further. Eileen felt the harsher sentences were not just due to the work the Probation Service had undertaken, but also the work of the local Domestic Violence Forums who had an on-going programme of raising awareness with magistrates of domestic violence issues. However, training and awareness raising with magistrates in Northumberland on domestic violence does not seem to have had the same impact. Nevertheless, Eileen explains that;

'The clerk is directing the magistrates on how to sentence, and that was a particular problem we (Probation) had with some horrific examples at South East

Northumberland.....I mean South East Northumberland and Tynedale are probably pretty similar. But if you compare with somewhere like Gateshead or Sunderland then their sentencing is much harsher for domestic violence. (Why do you think that is?) There's been a lot of resources put into it in the past. The Forums have been very, very active there.....there is a history of a lot of work over a long period of time...you're talking years of work really'. (Eileen: 8)

The under reporting of domestic violence was raised by agency representatives. They raised the question as to whether the clerk, magistrates or the jury were a perpetrator or a victim of domestic violence. If so, they argued, this would obviously influence their sentencing policy. Celia and Gloria were just two of a small number of service providers who expressed this view. Initially Celia talks about who could be a victim or perpetrator on the jury. She says;

'.....the reality of domestic abuse, of course it's hidden, so who on the jury is a perpetrator or a victim?' (Celia: 7)

Whereas Gloria mentions the role of the Magistrates Clerk by stating that;

'..is the Magistrates Clerk, isn't that the man who reads the boards...he might also be an abuser. So he's not going to give as much bloody priority is he?' (Gloria: 10)

The evidence presented shows that magistrates, especially in terms of sentencing, are not the most understanding when it comes to domestic violence cases despite receiving training. Whereas we have seen how the police response to domestic violence has improved, magistrates in rural Northumberland still have progress to make.

The Probation Service deliver accredited programmes for perpetrators. They also, along with other key agencies, work with the police in MAPPA's, which is a partnership approach to dealing with high risk offenders of violent sexual crimes. During the previous decade the Probation Service in Northumbria ran the DIVERT programme for perpetrators of domestic violence; and since 2006 they have run a

twenty six week fully accredited programme for perpetrators. Both these programmes were groupwork based with individual work carried out separately with the perpetrator and their Probation Officer. The DIVERT programme was developed in-house and was an eight week programme. Complementing the programme was a group of safety workers who, as well as working with the perpetrators in the group, liaised with Victim Support who were working with the victim. However, the service for victims was voluntary and would be accessed at the victim's discretion. But as a probation worker states;

'This was sort of early days really, in terms of domestic violence work, but at least the service had made the step forward and was actively dealing with perpetrators and victims'. (Samantha: 2)

However, there was no evaluation of the programme and the only evidence of the programme's impact was anecdotal. Nevertheless the National Probation Directorate set up a system whereby specialist programmes needed to be accredited. In response to this Northumbria Probation implemented the Community Domestic Violence Programme in 2006. The programme itself comprises twenty six sessions, running once a week. At the time of the field work the Probation Service were looking to deliver two sessions per week. This was due to the fact that experience shows it is harder to keep perpetrators engaged for twenty six weeks.

Prior to the programme commencing perpetrators undertake a psychometric test and another at the end of the programme. Perpetrators who attend the new programme are tracked for a six month period after the programme has ended. This allows the Probation Service to assess the impact the programme has had, or is having, on the perpetrator. The introduction of the programme led to a;

'...much more integrated approach than we had when we were working on DIVERT because we have now got links with the police, with Social Services, with the women's safety workers so it is a much more holistic approach because we are all working much more closely together, which is good. What we have with the police is that when an offender comes up with a PSR (Pre Sentence Report), we get back to them

with a name of the offender and they send us back any details of any call outs they have had and whatever so we can get an actual pattern of what is actually going on'. (Samantha: 4)

This closer working allowed the police and Probation to exchange information on perpetrators and help Probations Officers working with the perpetrators to gain information on the perpetrators' background to see if there are patterns to their behaviour. Reductions in budgets have led to a restructuring of teams who manage and deliver the accredited programmes, which led to a backlog as Samantha explains;

'Now we have got people trained and people who are going to do it sort of full time so to speak, to be able to get through that backlog, offer people a better service in that they can get on the programme quicker than they have been doing in the past and hopefully that is going to make a big difference'. (Samantha: 18)

The backlog had arisen, according to Samantha, because there were not enough workers trained to deliver the programmes. However, that has been rectified and has helped the service reach their target of completions of the programme. If this target is not met then budgets can be compromised, adding pressure to an already over stretched workforce. The new accredited programme, as with DIVERT, is delivered in Newcastle and North Tyneside but not Northumberland. Therefore, this means that perpetrators in Northumberland have to make their own travel arrangements. The Probation Service knows this is not ideal, but the situation has not caused major difficulties as Samantha explains;

'I don't think we have experienced too many difficulties with men actually doing that but occasionally and I have to say, it is very occasionally that we do get people for whom buses and trains and things just don't fit..it depends on whether somebody is working or not'. (Samantha: 9)

These issues highlighted by Samantha give rise to a number of issues. If the sentencing of domestic violence perpetrators is at best inconsistent and at worst poor, then there will continue to be insufficient numbers for the Probation Service to deliver

accredited programmes. Moreover, due to a lack of resources, there are not enough officers trained to deliver the programmes then this raises questions as to the effectiveness of dealing with perpetrators of domestic violence.

A partnership approach to the management of high risk offenders, including perpetrators of violent sexual crimes, would bring together all relevant partners to the table to discuss the best way of managing the risk of re-offending by identified perpetrators of such crimes. This partnership approach called a Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) was introduced in the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000. As part of this arrangement in Northumberland a Public Protection Unit (PPU) was introduced with the aim of a partnership approach to tackling high risk offenders. The introduction of the PPU in Northumberland has been welcomed favourably by service providers. A selection of their comments on the impact of the PPU is highlighted below; firstly Phillip says;

'I think it (PPU) is having an impact, but I think it has the potential to do more...It's a good approach. I think it is something which is likely to improve developing police performance and demand the services from other agencies to support the police is what's needed'. (Phillip: 2/13)

Phillip's views are underpinned by Gloria who states;

'I think it's a really good start, it's a really positive start'. (PPU) (Gloria: 8)

However, Hannah is supportive but is more cautious than others stating;

'It depends upon the police officer, it's down to personality again. The one thing I do think is excellent is the new PPU'. (Hannah: 8)

Overall agency representatives are supportive of the PPU and see it as;

'...a very, very positive development'. (Joan: 6)

As outlined earlier in the chapter, victims' experiences of the police had been

somewhat negative. However, Cindy, who had had negative experiences when calling out the police was pleasantly surprised on another occasion when the PPU was in operation and she was visited by a Domestic Violence Officer. She recalls that;

'The Domestic Violence Officer at Bedlington....she has really been absolutely brilliant. She has really been a real source of support'. (Cindy: 18)

She continues;

'She is really helpful; really, everything is my decision, my choice'. (Cindy: 19)

Cindy concluded by stating her preference for a female officer by saying;

'I would have preferred that there be a female officer present when the incident happened originally and also, that at least being given some points of contact for support for myself'. (Cindy: 20)

One of the ways the PPU has benefited partners is in the collection of data. After an incident the officer has to complete a ten point up-date on the computer when back at the station. Information collected can include any children present, whether the victim was referred to other services etc. The reason for the introduction of this system is that historically a lot of the information was not collected by the officer. Once the ten point up-date has been completed, it is assessed for category of risk to the victim. There are three categories of risk; standard, increased and high risk (ACPO 2004). As Amy states;

'The police are more often than not the first port of call and generally, now, I think the police response is accepted to be good and sympathetic and they've developed a check list so that every incident is checked that it's been handled appropriately'. (Amy: 18)

This recent development is confirmed by a PPU officer, but they admit that the process still needs tightening up;

'I mean there is something about at the moment in relation to whether or not an officer does put a file in a domestic violence related file. There is a check list they have to put in on the file, so it's getting tighter and it's getting better, they're having to supply the CPS with all the details which I was just talking about before, but it's getting that to the magistrates so they know. It's disseminating it out through the process...I mean I was quite surprised when I heard that, at the West, that officers aren't doing that cos it's just bread and butter stuff'. (Dawn: 8)

Those who are deemed high risk are visited the next day by a Police Domestic Violence Officer attached to the PPU. This happens as a matter of course even if, at the time of the incident, the victim said they did not wish to be visited. The purpose of the visit is to assist and support the victim in whatever course of action they wish to take; the result being that the victim does not feel or become isolated. Moreover, victims are also asked if they wish to be referred to Victim Support. If a victim wishes to retract their statement the police will visit and offer more support and try to get the victim more involved, so they do not become isolated. As David, a serving officer, states;

'..the officer has left and they feel isolated and they need somebody like a Domestic Violence Officer, even if they are not high risk, to say look, we are still here, just down the road, just pick up the phone'. (David: 10/11)

Furthermore, a colleague of David's states that;

'..what we don't want is officers to just go and say, yeah OK, then I will just take that statement, and just don't bother. What we want is support and persuasion to stay with it'. (Wilma: 8)

The improvement the PPU has made has contributed positively to victims' experiences, and made sure that victims have received the support they have needed. They have been listened to and not made to feel that were to blame for the violence. This allows the victim choices which may not have been available in the past. As Joan explains;

'With Domestic Violence Officers coming over on the public protection, it's treat very, very sensitively, they take them hand and hand through it. They give her ways to go, this is what will happen if you go hand in hand with the police, this is what will happen if you just disappear and get yourself set up somewhere else. The woman's given these choices now, but she's actually still off-loading to a police officer....She'll give us her knowledge, and she'll listen with the woman and she'll say, right I don't want to take action on this but it'll be detrimental to her, but we may take it as intelligence, all of that kind of thing. So it's been fabulous to us'. (Joan: 7)

The protocols that PPU officers have to follow means that there should be a reduction in the number of times the police are called to the same address (Lloyd et al 1994). Certainly, over the last twenty years, this has happened on a regular basis where the victim feels nothing is being done, and the police themselves fail to deal adequately with the situation or become fed-up of being called to the same address Hannah explains the situation by stating;

'They'll interpret it in the way they want to. If it's the first time then maybe they'll go out. The second, third, fourth, fifth it will be; what do you want us to do pet? I think it will be some of the older police officers rather than the young ones'. (Hannah: 9)

Whereas, Thelma explains how, in this situation, victims' experiences could be improved;

'...and you want to get the police and other agencies to say, well, hang on, if we are going out and I think the police are starting to get there now. If we are going out, if we are seeing this woman ten times, we have to be aware that it is escalating, so for you as a police officer, they have to be back at that house again but they think, how many times have we been there, this is the twelfth time and this is getting serious. At first it was just a push and a shove, but now he's hitting her with something or she is hitting him with something...so it is getting the police officer...to think a bit more and then refer in...it could be a child, a school where children are being kept out of school, why are they being kept out of school?' (Thelma: 29)

Dawn, who at the time of the field work was an officer with the PPU, explains the difference now in the police approach. She states;

'I think when you're on a shift, you know, before the Public Protection came in they just dealt with officers. They just dealt with it on their own, there was no-one over seeing it. Then if the victim said I don't want to push it, then they wouldn't. There was nobody else saying yes, do this. There was nobody else pulling out all the old stuff, saying there's been five or six this year let's go and push this. There would be nobody doing that. Now we're here we can do that'. (Dawn: 7)

This closer working has also enhanced relationships between the police and Probation Service. Probation staff now work more closely with the police and this joint working assists in tracking and identifying high risk victims and perpetrators. Prior to the PPU, the Probation Service may have been the only agency working with perpetrators of domestic violence and therefore would have had limited information on individual perpetrators. Since the introduction of MAPPA all relevant agencies are involved in the process of assessing individual cases, agreeing an action plan and sharing information with all the agencies involved (Bryan and Payne 2003, Peay 2007). This process means that the victim also receives support, which assists in her coping with the added pressures the abuse and violence brings. Samantha, a Probation Officer, feels this process is beneficial because the perpetrator programme is only a small part of a bigger jigsaw of managing the risk posed by the perpetrator. She explains that the meetings are interagency and;

'..meet on a monthly basis with the police and Social Services to discuss the men who are on the programme so that what is happening is everybody will be keeping everybody informed all the way along the line so that risk is being managed because I think, what we are always saying is, it is not just the programme, the programme is not just some kind of magic sort of wand, you have to have all the external controls around as well to actually manage the risk and even if the man does not sort of respond to the programme, at least we know that we are sharing that and we know how to manage it afterwards'. (Samantha: 6)

Evidence suggests that the introduction of the PPU has been welcomed by partners and has shown the positive benefits of partnership working. That the police and Probation are now working in tandem to identify and manage the risk posed by perpetrators can only, in the long term, bring benefits to the victims of domestic violence.

Social Justice Response to Domestic Violence in Rural Northumberland

This section will examine the social justice response to domestic violence in rural Northumberland. The first part of this section will highlight the views of service providers both from the voluntary and statutory sector, in relation to difficulties with service provision. The second section will concentrate on accommodation, but specifically focus on refuge provision and Local Authority housing provision; thus linking the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Service Provision

Voluntary sector organisations within Northumberland are varied and diverse. At the time of the research there were only two specialist domestic violence organisations operating in Northumberland; both were to be found in the voluntary sector. The first organisation was CEASE 24 which is based at Wooler in the North of the County. The second agency, 608030, was based at Hexham in the West of the County. 608030 were formed after the demise of the Woman's Aid satellite project in Hexham.

Because of the short term nature of funding within the voluntary sector, the opportunity for long term planning for domestic violence services was somewhat restricted. This raised two main issues; several organisations were overstretched, as many staff would be part-time and there was also a marked shortage of specialist domestic violence services, which is a common theme to emerge from other studies (Heise et al 2002, Henderson 1997, Hodge and Monk 2004, Williams 1999). The lack of specialist services became more apparent as approximately 35 % of mainly statutory employees expressed the opinion that they had been given the responsibility

for domestic violence on top of their everyday work commitments; an issue which has been reflected in previous studies (Hague et al 1996, Welsh 2008). As Freda says;

'...there's a lot of stuff in domestic abuse which is run out of good will and that's not enough'. (Freda: 13)

The main domestic violence services for victims in Northumberland are provided by the voluntary sector. This, for some, is partly due to the reliance by the statutory sector on the voluntary sector to provide these services. Subsequently, the commitment of the statutory sector organisations to domestic violence was seen, by some interviewee's as not being one hundred percent, as Amy explains;

'They (statutory agencies) should set aside funds from their mainstream budgets to fund domestic violence services because essentially, what happened, is it's been left in the lap of the voluntary sector for better or worse, some good some, not so good, unregulated, unaccountable, just very hit and miss'. (Amy: 4)

Kirsty develops this theory further by stating that;

'Voluntary sectors aren't really listened to, they're not treated seriously'. (Kirsty: 11)

As mentioned above, a lot of domestic violence work is run on goodwill. However, this can present a problem especially if individual workers involved are not fully aware of the complex nature of domestic violence. Whilst this is not a criticism of these individuals, as Celia explains;

'....there is a tremendous lot of will, but there is a lot of ignorance among workers and it's not their fault. I think they really want to do the best thing, but they don't have the training and they don't have the time'. (Celia: 12)

The lack of specialist domestic violence services and resources in the County has a knock on effect, as Freda explains;

'I think with 608030, even when it was Tynedale Women's Aid, it was a completely overstretched organisation'. (Freda: 12)

Furthermore, Nina mentions that however good the service these two organisations provide for domestic violence victims, there will be gaps in provision which are underpinned by the lack of resources;

'CEASE 24 provides a great service in the North. 608030 provides a good service in the West, although it is specifically a counselling service, but there's a lot of gaps that people are trying to plug with outreach workers from Victim Support...I think services are very stretched to capacity is a massive issue'. (Nina: 19)

Partners from the voluntary sector who delivered services admitted they needed to improve the advertising of their services, to ensure victims of domestic violence would have a greater awareness of what was available in their area. Raising awareness of service provision was linked to the more general need for training among service providers on issues of domestic violence; issues which have been noted in previous studies (Hague, Mullender and Aris 2003, Home Office 2003a).

Here Gloria highlights the issue;

'We're not very good at advertising our service enough to let women know that we are here'. (Gloria: 3)

Whereas, Hannah takes the issue further by stating that there needs to be better awareness raising of service provision and issues associated with domestic violence (Maguire and Corbett 1987, Shapland 1985); but stresses over the previous decade there has been no domestic violence services to advertise. She says;

'There needs to be more awareness raising of domestic abuse and the problems and the fact that it's not right...There's been no services to promote awareness or raise awareness'. (Hannah: 2)

Raising the awareness of domestic violence services requires a proactive approach to the problem, and agencies need to be sure that those in most need are able to access this information, especially in rural areas. Moreover, if this information is reaching victims, and again particularly in rural areas, they also need to know what the service provides. The names of the two specialist domestic violence services in Northumberland, CEASE 24 and 608030, are not necessarily names one may associate with domestic violence. Those working with these organisations will know what services they provide, but as a lay member of the public it may not be quite as clear, as Pauline explains.

'I have great difficulty with them (608030) I don't think it's a good choice of name, I think it is really difficult one and it's not obvious to people what it is. I know what they are there for, but that is it'. (Pauline: 8)

The point raised by Pauline was also confirmed by one of the victims who was interviewed who said;

'I know about Women's Aid and obviously that had been a thought from time to time. I knew about Cease 24 but I sometimes think, I sometimes wonder was it because that, you know, because of the work that I do, it was thought that I could cope with it. I don't know whether... that shouldn't make a difference, whether you do that type of work or not'. (Cindy: 14)

The point is further emphasised by Andrea who said that;

'I think had I have been aware before, I might have done something sooner, but I didn't know there was things. I mean I wished really in a way, I mean I have seen things since, since I've made the move. I've seen things in ladies toilets with domestic violence with a number...because I had already made the move....and I had seen it. But I wouldn't have thought that I could have rang that number, cos I thought, cos you had to be...beaten physically, and I really didn't know what was around, you know. I suppose I'm being a bit stupid but I really didn't know'. (Andrea: 23)

And finally lack of advertising of services was also mentioned by Ella who said;

'But like they do need some advertising here'. (Ella: 50)

Another issue for partners from both sectors was what type of response a victim should receive when accessing services. Partners suggested a number of ways victims would feel welcome when initially accessing a service. Among those highlighted was the need for the victim to receive a warm response and given support at all times. The service needs to be discrete and the victim needs to be in, or given, control of their situation. Also the victim should not be forced or pushed into doing something against their wishes, as Hannah explains;

'...when you are dealing with women you've got to make sure you're doing everything the way they want it done and you are not forcing your opinions on them, or forcing them to do things they're are not ready to do, like leave their partners or what ever'. (Hannah: 12)

She continues by saying;

'Because if you push them into a service...into using a service; they'll probably never come back'. (Hannah: 12)

Ingrid emphasises that if a victim's initial contact with services is not a good experience then this may mean they are reluctant to engage further, which is similar to previous studies (Eastman and Bunch 2007, Hague 2000, Hoff 1990, Wilcox 2006). Ingrid explains that;

'...if the victim is not helped or not given a warm, comfortable experience to start off with, then I think that colours their view for the rest'. (Ingrid: 5)

An example of a victim not receiving a positive response from agencies was experienced by Cindy who explains;

'I rang Social Services because I felt I needed some help with this and I felt I could not talk to anyone outside of the family. I felt really on my own with it and I was told by Social Services that I sounded like I was the sort of person that was able to deal with it and I was coping with the situation and this was the on duty Social Worker up at Alnwick'. (Cindy: 2)

Furthermore, Joan exposes the myth that domestic violence victims do not know what they want. She explains that there needs to be dialogue between senior management with the workers on the ground so that victims are involved in developing or accessing the services they require. She says;

'I think there's this myth that women suffering domestic violence don't know what they want. They don't know what they want because they haven't had the capabilities to get up and leave that situation, they're not strong enough to know what they want, and it's quite the reverse saying exactly what they want, but they're just not being asked...I think these people who are higher management really need to get somebody a little bit lower on the ground and get to these women and actually say to them, you're suffering domestic violence or abuse. What would you like to see happen? What services would you like here?.....They might just say I want somebody to talk to, to guide me through the process of moving on, to get new homes, to get me what benefits that I'm going to be entitled to. To help me get employment, to educate me, whatever it is they want. And I think that's what women are absolutely furious about in Northumberland. They're not being asked'. (Joan: 12)

Looking from another angle Larry has concerns that, unlike other client groups such as alcohol and substance misusers, victims of domestic violence are not consulted and involved in the development of services and asked what type of services are required. Failure to consult victims has been shown to be a concern in previous studies (Hague 2005, Hague and Mullender 2005, Wendt 2009). Larry states that;

'...it seems to me to ask domestic abuse survivors/victims to help develop the service that they think they need. And I don't know why because we don't seem to have the same misgivings in other areas of our work where we consult with drug users and

alcohol misusers and various other people'. (Larry: 16)

For a County the size of Northumberland, the provision of only two part-time services for victims of domestic violence is inadequate. There is a heavy reliance on the voluntary sector to provide these services, even though they work within financial constraints. This situation is further complicated by domestic violence being an 'add on' to people's everyday job. The fact that the providers themselves, by their own admission, do not promote their services as well as they could, does little to assist victims. These issues are further complicated by the rural nature of the county which raises issues of distance, time and isolation.

Accommodation – Housing and Refuge Provision

Accommodation for victims is provided by the voluntary sector in the form of the refuge and by the statutory sector in terms of social housing provision. The response by these separate bodies to the accommodation needs of domestic violence victims highlighted many issues for partners; none more so than the lack of suitable accommodation. Refuge provision for victims in Northumberland is, by partners' own admission, inadequate. A new purpose built refuge was constructed not far from the old one, and in close proximity to the local police station. Since opening in 2004 it has been run by Cheviot Housing. Over the previous decade the refuge in Northumberland was managed by Women's Aid. There is also concern that with the refuge being located in the South East of the County, there is a whole network of women in the North and West of the County who may not come forward knowing that there is not a refuge in their locality, as Amy explains;

'One argument is that incidents of domestic violence is higher in the South East and therefore it's the correct place to situate it, even the limited refuge provision there is available. But the other side of the argument is that there is a whole network of women, a whole range of people right throughout North Northumberland and South West Northumberland who aren't coming forward as victims of domestic violence because they know that there is absolutely no way that any of the existing services are going to help them. So the argument is that there may be a whole, a vast number of

unreported incidents of domestic violence in the rural areas and victims literally suffering in silence and isolation in rural areas'. (Amy: 1)

Freda also has concerns regarding victims from the rural areas of the North and West being asked to access services in the South East of the County. She says that;

'If you are from a rural area and you are plunged into what is a relative cauldron of South East Northumberland, what does that tell you? Where is the reward for you there? Women have said we've been punished enough anyway, we don't want to go somewhere we're not familiar with. We don't know our way round somewhere. Let's face it the refuge in Bedlington was in a very deprived area, quite an intimidating area. I certainly know that by experience from visiting the refuge. So I think people don't want to leave...you know they want to be safe but they don't want to go to a community they feel unsafe in'. (Freda: 7)

Whereas Joan emphasises the reality of the situation further by stating;

'If you've left a £200,000 house, and you've been dumped in Bedlington Station, you're not going to stay very long. You're going to go back because it's the standard of living you've been used to'. (Joan: 11)

While research suggests that the location of the refuge is paramount for access (Bosch and Schumm 2004, Rawsthorne 2008), a quarter of respondents expressed concerns at the present day to day running of the refuge scheme. These concerns centre around the refuge, unlike the previous one, being staffed only during office hours. There is also unease that Cheviot Housing, as a Housing Association with no background in domestic violence, taking full responsibility for the day to day running of the refuge. Renee, who had worked for Women's Aid, takes up the story;

'Cheviot Housing that they went with, had never been involved with any domestic violence projects and what they designed was a housing project which they could then use for other purposes if they went pear shaped and they couldn't get the money out of it. We had a manager co-ordinator who did not have a clue, knew very little about the

subject. Her background was in housing which, you know, was useful at that point for getting the housing project off the ground but did not have a domestic violence background'. (Renee: 10/11)

Pauline also expressed similar concerns;

'But the refuge now is so different to how it used to run. We used to work very closely with Northumberland Women's Refuge and had a really working relationship with them and we worked with each other. It was very, very good actually but it is not the same. It is run so differently this one. I think it is because it is a Housing Association and that is what they are, they are housing consultants. I am pleased it is there, don't get me wrong'. (Pauline: 8/9)

Further concerns were expressed regarding staffing levels at the refuge, which Gloria explains has an impact on victims' experiences.

'They know they're out of immediate danger, they need to talk, they need to off load some of the horrendous experiences they've had. The staff there don't have time to do it. I mean by their (Refuge) own admission they don't. But I just keep hitting a closed door'. (Gloria: 5)

Concern about the refuge not having a twenty four hour service and the time for victims to off load their experiences is encapsulated in this quote from a resident at the refuge who explained that;

'I think that would have been nice, and then when I first come here as well, when the first week, I was on me own, and it's so hard, I didn't know anybody, the girls had gone home(workers)...sitting on me own night after night...I really needed somebody to talk to, I felt like I was gonna scream, I couldn't sleep, I was up all night listening to music and I just really needed somebody to talk to....And I thought I wished there had been a support worker that worked at the nights where they could come across'. (Andrea: 48)

There was also acknowledgement from stakeholders for the need for increased provision of specific refuge staff, including outreach workers. At the time of the field work there was only one outreach worker working from the refuge and by her own admission, there will be partners who do not know that worker exists;

'If you were to mention my name to anybody they would say, who? They wouldn't know who I was...and if I'm the only Domestic Violence Outreach Worker in Northumberland or floating support worker, they certainly should know who I am, but they don't'. (Kirsty: 10)

Her concerns that no one knows she exists was echoed by Gloria, a front line service provider, who was uncertain if outreach services from the refuge existed. Gloria says;

'I'm so disappointed, so disappointed in the refuge...they don't offer any kind of outreach service at all as far as I'm aware'. (Gloria: 5)

If partners from different agencies are not aware of each other then efforts should be made to rectify the situation. As discussed above, agencies admit they could be better at advertising their services (Hague, Mullender and Aris 2003, Home Office 2003a), but dialogue between front line service providers, in this case the refuge and Victim Support, has been shown to be fundamental (Davies, Croall and Tyrer 2005, Goodey 2005, Pizzey 1974, Zedner 1997). In keeping with a lot of voluntary organisations, funding for retaining and recruiting staff is essential. This is emphasised by refuge staff who admit there is a need for more outreach workers and also more refuge space;

'I think we need more refuge space. We need an awful lot of outreach staff. I think if there's outreach services, women would access it easier'. (Joan: 11)

Various other agency representatives expressed concerns that communication channels between themselves and the refuge staff could be improved. However, the refuge staff themselves voiced concerns that they were not consulted in the development of the Northumberland strategy. Invitations to Forum meetings were not consistent and because of this, dialogue with other partners suffered. Both refuge

staff and various partners expressed concern, not just at the lack of refuge spaces, but also the location of the refuge. The refuge itself is sited in a deprived area in the South East of the County; the location of which reflects previous research (Eastman and Bunch 2007, Mama 2000, Wilcox 2006). Distance and time becomes an issue for victims and agency representatives who are situated in the more outlying areas of the county. A quarter of those interviewed felt victims who reside in more idyllic areas would find the prospect of moving to a deprived district somewhat off-putting. Also, if victims had children this complicated the problem more in terms of children having to change schools which, Dawn states, could mean they do not report abuse or access services in the first place;

'...accommodation wise in the rural areas...if the offender is still in the house it's very difficult because their gonna have to be moved some distance away. It's gonna effect their schooling and I suppose if somebody has been assaulted and they're waying up, this is gonna be, you know, their not wanting to disrupt their children's lives so much so that might be a reason why they don't'. (Dawn: 2)

Amy also expresses similar concerns she says;

'In the rural areas not only are there no services but it's extremely difficult for them (victims) to access the services in the likes of the South East, although technically they're available for the whole of Northumberland. But for a woman to find her way in the middle of the night....some miles to some place they've never seen in Ashington or Bedlington, with the kids, is a huge upheaval and then what do they do with the kids school? They've got to move their schools perhaps to a less desirable school. It brings a whole package of stuff with them that's harder for them to bear and harder for them to work through'. (Amy: 7)

There is also concern that even if a victim wishes to access a place at the refuge, they may not be able to access the one in Northumberland due to lack of space. Lack of refuge space has been found to be an issue in other studies (Bosch and Schumm 2004, Rawsthorne 2008) and Barbara draws on her personal experience and states;

'I think refuge provision is a very difficult one. I know that if we have had to refer people to a women's refuge we've had to...we rarely if ever manage to get a place first time around. In this area we would look to the nearest one to us which would probably be in Ashington, after that you're going to South Shields, you're going to Newcastle way and all this kinda thing. I am aware there is now one in Bedlington which we can refer to...' (Barbara: 11)

However, she also has concerns that victims may be aware there is a refuge but not sure how to access it. Barbara explains;

'I think most people are aware there are women's refuges around but generally don't know where they are or what they do or how you access them or what have you'. (Barbara: 16)

But for Amy, refuge provision isn't necessarily popular (Levison and Harwin 2001);

'Refuge provision isn't popular because it's the last resort, but when people need it, it's got to be there and it just isn't'. (Amy: 4)

Another problem with the refuge highlighted by Freda was about visitors not being allowed;

'You can tell them you're in a refuge but you can't tell them where because you're not allowed to accept visitors. So I think it's a terrible journey for people that they are the ones who have not been in the wrong and had to move...loss of property, upheaval of children, being isolated, while dealing with all sorts of physiological aftermath of the abuse'. (Freda: 7)

Whilst Joan has other concerns which the victim needs to take into account. She states;

'...it has been very, very difficult because they're temporary residents and nobody wants to take them on. I think GPs' can have their awareness raised tremendously,

because nobody wants to help a woman with a temporary residence'. (Joan: 4)

A place at a refuge is not the only option available to victims. Housing provided by the Local Authorities is another option they can explore. However, there is acknowledgement by partners as to the lack of social housing throughout the County. The lack of social housing is one which is generally problematic (Eastman and Bunch 2007, Mama 2000, Wilcox 2006). Housing staff concede there is a shortage, but are also aware that the housing available is far from suitable and more often than not situated in deprived areas (Mama 2000, Wilcox 2006) Eileen sums this up as follows;

'Oh, certainly, yeah...it's as much of a problem as anywhere. But I think probably in terms of getting things like housing and stuff and getting out of the situation, it's probably a lot more difficult in a rural area'. (Eileen: 1)

She continues;

'...big ones got to be housing and somewhere for them to go...' (Eileen: 10)

It is recognised that housing is a general problem and not just specific to victims of domestic violence (Kirkwood 1993). However, there needs to be an understanding that, whilst there may be a shortage of suitable housing provision, it is counterproductive to put victims in unsuitable housing, as Michael explains;

'If somebody's leaving a house where they've got everything around them, they shouldn't be shoved into the very basic tenancy would be to go back to what they had before, irrespective of the violence and abuse, because the children need that and they suppress their own problems. Unless we give them that option, then we're not doing our best service to them'. (Michael: 8)

The issue of suitable housing was a subject broached by two of the victims interviewed. In the first instance Andrea recalls her experience of being offered a property. Although this offer was made by a Local Authority outside of Northumberland it does highlight the problem of suitable accommodation. She

explains that;

'When I went to view it, it was the most appalling thing I have ever seen in me life, and I thought how can you offer that to me? I was just absolutely appalled and disgusted. To think that I'd had an interview with them, the Council had said we'll take on board, we'll take on board your circumstances, we'll take on board your age, your situation, and we'll try and house you with people that's sort of my age, and I actually, they were giving me - I'd rather walk the streets as take this place, I'm telling you'. (Andrea: 18)

She continues;

'..I mean I just never realised how bad the situation is, there's just no houses to be got'. (Andrea: 20)

Whereas Ella talked about the type of area she would have liked to have been housed in and explains the pitfalls of accepting a property in a run down area;

'I want to be in a nice area, cos they tried to hoy us in this area...and I don't want to go into a horrible area because I know I'd fail, with the drugs and all that, do you know what I mean? ...I just want a chance to, like, to be put in a nice little area with a nice little house and garden'. (Ella: 43)

However, there is some concern that the approach advocated by Michael, who, at the time of the field work was employed by Wansbeck Council, is in Amy's experience, not being carried out as she explains;

'Wansbeck.... takes quite a tough line in determining whether a person is a victim of domestic violence and technically it should be a self definition. If someone presents as a victim of domestic violence that should be enough for them to be accepted. I do see why the Local Authorities can't accept that because everyone could just be turning up saying I'm a victim of domestic violence, re-house me tomorrow. But they do take quite a stiff line in interviewing the victim before they become convinced that

the victim might be worthy of...actually being awarded domestic violence status for re-housing'. (Amy: 12)

For Joan her experience of the same Local Authority is different as she explains;

'I think Wansbeck are very good, and they seem to understand domestic violence a lot...I suspect Blyth Valley need an awful lot of training. They don't understand nor do they recognise domestic violence or abuse....well, in actual fact it's more cost effective to get these women into good housing first time round so they can establish their lives and move forward rather than go back, and they come back again for housing. They may apply to the Council four or five times, have four or five properties, that's not cost effective to anyone'. (Joan: 11)

However, Ingrid, drawing from her own experience as a Housing Officer felt that victims do not actually want to move. She states;

'A lot of people who we meet, who say they need to be re-housed, don't actually want to leave where they're living at the moment. They want to do it in a more planned way not in a crisis, if possible'. (Ingrid: 5)

Even if victims are allocated suitable housing or find a place at the refuge, they still have other obstacles to overcome, as Celia explains;

'But housing is always the main thing; knowing what to do about benefits, knowing what to do about council tax, somebody to fill in the forms'. (Celia: 10)

As with specialist domestic violence services, accommodation for victims of domestic violence is far from adequate. Partners have expressed a number of issues associated with the refuge, most notably its location and the fact that it is managed by a Housing Association. Social housing provision is also inadequate and what is available is situated in mostly deprived areas. The evidence presented in this chapter shows there are major changes to be made in Northumberland if domestic violence is to be tackled and victims are to see the benefit of these changes. Evidence suggests that agencies

are aware of the problems but actually addressing them in pro-active manner seems to be the missing cog in the machine.

Summary

What this chapter has tried to elicit from agency representatives is the distinct nature of the criminal and social justice response to domestic violence in rural Northumberland. To that end, what emerges is that the police operational response to domestic violence is not viewed as positively as their strategic contribution; although there is a consensus that things have improved in the past decade. The PPU has been embraced by agency representatives and is considered as a more consistent and even handed approach. With the introduction of the PPU respondents are hopeful that the good start can be maintained and agencies can work more closely with the police to make sure this materialises.

Training, not just of police officers but also magistrates' personnel, is highlighted as a major concern and a failure to take domestic violence seriously is also reflected in magistrates' sentencing practices. However, it was felt that sentencing in the urban areas was more appropriate than in rural Northumberland. Rurality equates to a lack of services and the ones that do exist are, more often than not, over stretched. An interesting finding of the research was that the two specific domestic violence services in Northumberland were situated in the more rural areas of the North and West, whilst the refuge was situated in the more densely populated South East. Moreover, due to the location and limited space at the refuge, those wishing to access a refuge were having to go outside of the County. This situation was also the same for perpetrators of domestic violence who were given a requirement to attend an accredited programme. Availability of suitable housing was also an issue, but the geographical nature of rural areas adds another dimension as available housing in rural areas is scarce and sort after, with options limited due to availability, distance and time. Subsequently in the current financial climate with Local Authorities selling off existing housing stock, options become even more limited.

CHAPTER 8

Introduction

The main aim of the thesis has been to explore how rurality has impacted on the strategic and community safety response to domestic violence in rural Northumberland. This has been achieved by undertaking a series of interviews with stakeholders from the voluntary and statutory agencies and victims. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 detail the main findings from the research; highlighting issues specific to rural areas from a criminal justice, stakeholders and victims perspective.

From the findings there are four main themes which emerge; those being the police response, partnership working, distance and time and cultural differences specific to urban and rural communities. However, rurality, and how it influenced these themes, is pivotal in contextualising the findings in relation to the objectives of the thesis. This has been achieved by devising a framework of classifications of rural and setting them in the context of Northumberland. This shows how rurality has impacted on the four main themes to emerge. Although a lot of the issues highlighted arise in both urban and rural areas the classification of rural shows how these issues are exacerbated by the impact of and closeness to rurality. Moreover, the classification of rurality is important in that allows a better understanding of the issues faced by stakeholders and how this impacted on their work and victims experiences.

Furthermore, these findings have practical and strategic implications, not just for the present but also the future, for those involved in the development and delivery of domestic violence services. Most importantly, a classification of rural is the starting point for any practical and strategic initiatives; thus allowing the police response, partnership working, distance and time and cultural differences to be contextualised in relation to a rural geographical area.

This final chapter comprises of three main sections. The first section reflects on the research process, how it developed and the successes achieved. The following section explores the themes to emerge from the findings; the police response, partnership

working, distance and time and cultural differences which incorporates a discussion on the issues to emerge, especially how rurality impacts on the findings. The final section is a discussion of future implications for domestic violence related work, particularly how, in times of austerity, rurality will impact on the provision of services and the experience of victims of domestic violence.

Reflections on the Research Process

A reflection of the research process allows an analytical eye to review how the research was conducted, issues arising and the overall success of the methods used. Moreover, it allows the opportunity to identify different ways obstacles were overcome which in turn would assist in future research projects. The research itself, at times, has been arduous; but overall most fulfilling. The process of the research is well documented throughout the thesis and, on reflection; I feel that the overall process has been a success. The developments in the field during the research have, I believe, enhanced the thesis and given it more of a focus as well as providing an insight into how rurality has impacted on the intricacies of partnership working; a point which will be expanded further. At the beginning of the research, the twists and turns that would take place in Northumberland with their partnership efforts to address domestic violence both from a practical and strategic level; could not have been envisaged. This meant that the research was constantly evolving and therefore made the research process more vibrant and challenging. These evolving changes to the original aims and objectives of the thesis became intertwined with my everyday working practices. My involvement at the beginning of the strategic process meant that I was able to observe all initial developments as they unfolded. This allowed me to have a close hand insight into the politics, the development and the failures of the County Council and other agencies to develop a coherent strategy around domestic violence. These observations were invaluable when considering the implications of the evolving nature of the research.

It was only at the later stages of the strategic initiatives that I was not involved in the process due to issues which had arisen in the Department I was attached to. However, this did not have a negative impact on the research, but allowed me to identify one or two individuals who were involved, and subsequently interviewed, and who revealed how the Northumberland strategy on domestic violence was progressing.

The interviewing of police personnel, service providers and those involved in the development of the domestic violence strategy was a positive experience. Those who were interviewed were accommodating and generally supportive of my research. My contact with the local women's refuge and subsequent interviewing of victims was also positive. I was always made welcome at the refuge and found the staff supportive of my research, especially in their efforts to assist in the identification of victims and ensuing interviews. This made my initial contact with victims a relatively smooth process which, in turn, ensured that the proceeding interviews were conducted in an environment which was satisfactory to all. Moreover, my contact with WHAC was also positive and supportive and, as with the refuge, made the interviews with staff and victim a smooth and satisfactory process. This part of the research could have been fraught with difficulties, for example the ethical issues arising from a male researching domestic violence and access to the refuge (See Chapter 4 for more details). However, because of the support and work of the staff concerned no issues surfaced to my knowledge. Although access to victims was a positive experience I had only managed to interview three. Therefore, the strategic developments unravelling at the time gave me the opportunity to move the emphasis of the research towards the strategic approach.

One of the most arduous aspects of the research is how much time it took to collate, analyse and make sense of the data. However, during the data analysis some of the findings reflected my own perceptions of how rurality impacted on service provision and subsequently victims' experiences; proving to be an echo of my own perceptions which have been formulated over a number of years of rural living. These experiences, along with my observations of partnership working and strategic developments, assisted in setting the findings in context and also developed my understanding and knowledge of the impact rurality has on the strategic and

community safety response to domestic violence.

The time scale was further prolonged by the amount of time it took to complete all of the interviews. The availability of interviewees, the evolving nature of strategic developments and taking time off work for interviews all contributed to delays and the rescheduling of tasks. Moreover, working full-time also contributed to the expanding time scales in other ways, as at times work had to take priority; especially once I had become self employed. One of the main challenges after the data analysis, interviews and literature review had been completed was the formulating of chapters, sequencing and the subsequent writing up of each chapter. The redrafting of each chapter was very time consuming, but assisted in clarity of writing as well as in the construction and restructuring of each chapter. Nevertheless, in retrospect, I feel that if the research process had been completed earlier then this would have resulted in the core strategic developments being missed, much to the detriment of the thesis. As it turned out all relevant developments in the strategic process had taken place which meant the research concluded at a convenient juncture. Taking all these points into consideration the thesis makes a valuable contribution to criminological knowledge on the subject of domestic violence, and specifically on partnership working and the impact rurality has on these processes.

Themes

Rurality was difficult to define but the classifications of rural assisted in the process of distinguishing different types of rural - urban rural, differentiated rural, extreme and intermediate rural, rural idyll and official rural. Moreover, setting these classifications in the context of Northumberland assisted in developing an understanding of the complex geographical landscape of the County. The classification of rural also provided a clear framework from which to contextualise and understand the themes to emerge from the findings. This is especially true of how the geography of Northumberland meant that distance and time fundamentally impacted on the police, partnership working, access to and provision of services. Moreover, the classification of rural in relation to Northumberland symbolises the difficulties, similarities and differences arising in the strategic and community safety

response to domestic violence.

Police Response

The police response to domestic violence in rural Northumberland has been identified as a main theme to emerge from the research mainly due, as the literature suggests, to their continued domination of practical and strategic developments (Crawford 2007, Gilling 2005, Hughes 2007, Morley and Mullender 1994, Smith 2000, Squires and Measor 2007). The research does show some clear similarities, between rural and urban, in police practice which has been highlighted in other studies. One of the key issues to emerge from the research in relation to the police is their pro-active leadership, which included practical and strategic initiatives, training issues and the emergence of MAPPA and the PPU. This pro-active nature of police involvement with domestic violence in rural Northumberland stemmed from their chairpersonship of the Domestic Violence Forums when they were first set up in the late 1990s. Unfortunately when the police relinquished the chairpersonship of the Forums, in the hope that others would take over so the police were not seen as controlling initiatives, the Forums failed to meet regularly and at one stage no Forums were operational throughout the County.

The police were also instrumental in the setting up of the NDVP where certain officers showed commitment and leadership in trying to establish the Project. The failure of the Project, which is detailed in Chapter 6, led to further efforts to establish a countywide strategic response to domestic violence in which, once again, the police were at the forefront. Although the police response at an operational level was seen as acceptable, there can be little doubt that they played a fundamental role in the strategic response. Therefore, what were the reasons for the police having such a positive and influential role at this level? This research shows that one of the reasons the police took leadership was, as one officer alluded to, other partners expected them to lead. There was certainly, in the Forums and in the strategic approach, a reliance on the police to take control; however, there was a failure of others to show leadership both at a statutory and voluntary sector level. Clearly, the police had an important role to play, but so did other organisations such as the Local Authority, housing, the

refuge and services for victims. Failure of anyone from these organisations to show leadership and drive forward initiatives, such as service provision for victims, meant that the agenda was always heavily influenced by the police. This is not a criticism of the police, as any organisation given this much control would do exactly the same. What was needed was shared leadership and equity between stakeholders so that strategic responses would be more balanced and representative of the needs of the locality and would ultimately benefit victims. The advent of the PPU was embraced by stakeholders as a positive development which would contribute to a more measured and co-ordinated response to domestic violence. However, the PPU would have happened regardless whether there was a County strategy or not.

A lot of these issues have been identified by Hughes (2007) who suggested that the emergence of the CDRPs was an initiative that would go some way to restricting police dominance of partnerships, but he found that this did not materialise. He did, however, find that the police were quite happy to leave the development of strategies and audits to the Community Safety Officers. Moreover, any challenge to the police dominance of partnerships was more often than not ignored (Hughes (2007)). These issues raised by Hughes (2007) reflect developments in Northumberland. All five CDRPs had a strong police presence which at times saw more than one officer attending a meeting. The police also had strong links with the Community Safety Officers, all of whom were retired ex Northumbria police officers known to the majority of those serving police personnel involved in the partnership initiatives. They were therefore trusted to take a major role in strategic initiatives and prepare audits. The role of the Community Safety Officers underpinned the police dominance of the CDRPs and adhered to the police agenda. Moreover, the findings have shown that partners were happy for the police to take the lead and made no attempt to challenge their dominance.

To assist in breaking the dominance of the police in partnership working the Community Safety Officers should come from varied backgrounds and offer a range of relevant skills and experiences. Whilst the post would be related to crime and disorder, this should not mean that predominately ex-police officers are appointed. Rogers (2006) found that many Community Safety Officers did not have relevant

qualifications and lacked training in the workings of the CDRPs. Therefore, a more robust recruitment of Community Safety Officers is necessary, which includes a job description and person specification to reflect the many skills and experiences needed to undertake partnership duties. Being an ex-police officer should not be the main criteria on which Community Safety Officers are recruited. In Northumberland, at the time of the research, one Community Officer retired and was replaced by a recently retired officer from Northumberland who had been involved with the CDRPs; thus emphasising a blinkered approach from the County Council.

The dominance of the police and statutory agencies at the expense of the voluntary sector was also recognised by Hughes (2007) who also found that Community Safety Officers were seen as the ‘engine room’ of the CDRPs. Whilst not necessarily true in Northumberland it does, despite the evidence presented in Chapter 3, suggest that agencies and individuals put their trust in serving and ex-police personnel to lead partnerships on issues such as domestic violence. Whether or not there is a culture of blind trust for the police to take main responsibility for delivery of strategic objectives on sensitive issues, such as domestic violence, is debatable. However, evidence from this research suggests there was a feeling in the strategic group that the police should not have been challenged. However, this was not a common view and is in contrast to the police approach to the setting up the NDVP; which was more open and engaging.

Training on domestic violence, not just for police officers but also magistrates’ personnel, is highlighted as a major concern which has been a recurring theme from previous studies (Buzawa and Buzawa 1991, Gilchrist and Blissett 2002, Hague and Bridge 2008, Hanmer and Sanders 1993, Hoyle 1998, Morley and Mullender 1994). For Gilchrist and Blissett (2002) these issues related to magistrates not understanding that domestic violence was something that escalated over time and was not a one off incident. Moreover, Gilchrist and Blissett (2002) highlighted magistrates’ tendencies to give financial penalties or conditional discharges rather than referring them to perpetrator programmes. These were areas of concern for stakeholders interviewed for this research even though training had been and continues to be delivered. However, if individuals fail to take on board the objectives of training, this will continue to be a barrier in attempting to change ingrained attitudes and beliefs towards

domestic violence. As one respondent said, if you get a good officer the response is good, and the opposite if an officer still treats domestic violence as 'just a domestic.'

One of the main differences between urban and rural is the police response time to incidents in more extreme and intermediate rural areas; especially if the local rural police station is closed. Strategic initiatives on domestic violence should therefore take into consideration the location of police stations in intermediate and extreme rural areas and assess the impact these locations will have on victims and potential victims of domestic violence. In essence, there is a requirement to undertake a risk assessment of the location of rural police stations and response times to incidents of domestic violence.

However, the police have emerged as pro-active in trying to improve the strategic and partnership response to domestic violence. It could be argued that it was just a few officers who were responsible for the proactive approach to domestic violence and does not necessarily indicate that all Northumbria police personnel show the same commitment. In rural Northumberland the police certainly attempted to drive forward domestic violence initiatives and would possibly have had more success if there had been more proactive leadership shown from stakeholders.

Partnership Working

The partnership approach to working, as the literature suggests, has been advocated since the mid 1980s as the best approach to tackling issues both at a practical and strategic level. The partnership approach was adopted by Northumberland in pursuit of practical and strategic solutions to the issue of domestic violence. The findings show that this process was fraught with difficulties. Whilst this again, as the literature suggests, is common to a majority of partnership approaches (Blagg et al 1998, Burney 2005, Coliandris and Rogers 2008, Crawford 1997, Crawford and Jones 1995, Newburn and Jones 2002, Pearson et al 1992, Phillips 2002, Robinson, Hudson and Brookman 2008, Rogers 2006, 2004, Sampson et al 1988, Welsh 2008); the findings from this research show how the impact of rurality can be a contributory factor in these difficulties. These difficulties revolve around conflict between the rural and

more urban parts of Northumberland, differing crime rates and subsequent funding received by different Districts, as well as distance and time which impacts on stakeholders and victims of domestic violence.

The impact rurality can have on partnership working in Northumberland mainly focuses on the geographical nature of the County. In Northumberland the North and West are seen as predominantly rural whereas the South East is more urbanised. At the time of the research there were three Domestic Violence Forums; one in the South East, one in the North and one in the West. None of the Forums had standardised terms of reference or, before the strategic initiatives, any agreed plan on how the issue of domestic violence would be addressed countywide. Because of the geographical differences standardised terms of reference would have been difficult to implement. For instance, in the South East public transport was regular whilst in the North and West it was sporadic at best and non-existent at worst. Provision of general services was greater and more accessible in the South East compared with the North and West. Paradoxically domestic violence services were based in the North and West with the Refuge being situated in the South East.

Welsh's (2008) study reflects many of the issues which arose during this research but are more complex because of rurality. Welsh (2008), whose findings relate to partnership working in two northern towns, found that there was a lack of clarity around the roles of people who attended Domestic Violence Forums and found that different people represented the same organisation at different meetings. In Northumberland this is precisely what happened; the main reason being that there were three Domestic Violence Forums, and five CDRPs servicing the County. Subsequently, small voluntary sector agencies with limited staffing resources were restricted in their capacity to allow individuals to attend meetings outside their District(s).

Some of those who did attend, as Welsh (2008) found, attended only because they had an interest in domestic violence, as opposed to a direct remit through their work. Whilst this may not be ideal, in rural areas such as Northumberland it was a practical response especially for small voluntary sector organisations. This scenario again

reflects the problems faced especially by small voluntary sector organisations in relation to distance, time and finding the capacity to release staff to attend meetings in rural areas. Moreover, if people only attend because of their personal interest and are found to have little understanding of the complex nature of domestic violence, they should not be deterred from attending. Training should be provided for these individuals, which in the long term would benefit the partnership. In rural areas, because of the geography, attendance at meetings may be poor. Therefore, efforts should be made to retain those who do attend.

Welsh (2008) also found that there was very little proactive work undertaken with the Forums being an arena for 'joint talking' rather than 'joint working.' This thesis has also shown that there was a feeling among many that the Forum meetings were also talking shops. The 'talking shop' scenario stems both from a lack of proactive leadership and a determination to bring about change. Rather, it should be about taking responsibility; however this can be difficult in bureaucratic organisations such as Local Authorities where the decision making processes are drawn out. It is difficult to envisage this changing in the near future, but until it does partnership working will continue to have shortcomings and repeat past mistakes.

Welsh (2008) also highlights issues relating to poor attendance by some organisation, most notably magistrates, Probation and Health. In Northumberland there was also poor or non attendance by the same agencies. Whilst not making excuses for these organisations, the two-tier Local Government arrangements, which were in place at the time of the research, may have contributed to their non attendance. Because of these arrangements the number of Forum and CDRP meetings totalled eight, whereas in urban areas the possibility is there would be no more than two. Accepting that the attendance of these agencies is not necessarily good in urban areas, the number of meetings must impact on agencies in two-tier authorities generally; with partnership fatigue setting in especially if the partnerships are not productive. Although Northumberland is now a unitary authority I still envisage the same problems surfacing due to rural geographical differences. The more extreme and intermediate rural districts of the North and West still have the same problems regarding service provision, distance, time and police response times. Therefore, because of the more

centralised nature of partnerships the issues concerning extreme and intermediate rural areas may remain on the periphery. Moreover, with crime figures being generally lower in the outlying areas of the West and North of the County, the majority of funding for crime prevention initiatives will still most probably go to those Districts in the South East of the County. This subsequently could replicate the friction which occurred between urban rural and extreme and intermediate rural partners within Northumberland during the period of the research.

What the findings also reveal is that each District tended to focus on what was beneficial to them rather than looking at the countywide picture. Subsequently, the partnership approach became fragmented. In urban areas the geographical location generally means that there is an even spread of services and access to public transport is also more readily available. The dysfunctional nature of the Forums came to a head with the North and the West Forums competing against each other for Northern Rock funding. This occurred despite Northern Rock explicitly saying that in two-tier Authorities one bid from the County should be submitted. Some partners were involved in both bids, some were excluded from one bid but included in the other and some partners not included at all. In short, this was a recipe for dysfunctional partnership working. Even when strategic initiatives were introduced there was no evidence of a partnership approach which encompassed all partners and the influence of geographical differences was all too evident. However, despite the internal politics, a part-time service for victims was established in the North of the County. This was a product of the commitment of representatives from the North Domestic Violence Forum rather than being a reflection of a countywide response. The fragmentation of the partnership approach was not helped by local government arrangements.

The local government structure of a two tier Authority was problematic during the development of strategic initiatives. The funding of partnerships, especially the CDRPs, was seen as divisive and favourable to the more urban areas of the County. The findings show that some interviewees expressed the opinion that there was a widespread feeling that rural areas did not receive funding on the scale of their urban neighbours. This came about mainly because funding was based on crime figures and

the rural part of Northumberland showed very little criminal activity compared with the more urbanised South East of the County. The implications of funding being based on crime figures means that rural areas will always be the poor relation to their urban neighbours; thus meaning initiatives will be restricted due to lack of finance. Even when funding was allocated centrally, initially for the NDVP and then the strategic initiatives, problems arose.

Throughout the development of the NDVP some partners were more interested in the politics of personalities than the benefits of partnership working. The ‘behind the scenes’ manoeuvrings and the drip feeding of malicious gossip led to some partners focusing more on this than making the Project work. The strategic approaches which followed the demise of the NDVP were dominated by the police, Community Safety Officers and a few individuals from the Local Authorities, to the exclusion of others. At first the voluntary sector was under represented which has been recognised in previous studies (Hague and Mullender 2005, Hughes 2007) and there remained an impression of tokenism when they were included. Although there was an agreed strategic plan, this was not necessarily followed by the three Domestic Violence Forums. This new attempt at a strategic approach also lacked transparency in decision making, with many decisions taken outside the main meetings (Crawford and Jones 1996). The only meaningful thing produced from the strategic approach was a directory of services.

What made these developments distinctive to rural areas was the failure, not so much in the case of the NDVP, of those involved in the strategic initiatives to rural proof the strategy and take into consideration the geographical differentials between the Districts. As alluded to in Chapter 2, the classification of rural identifies many different strands which are complex and constantly evolving. These different complex classifications needed to be reflected in the Domestic Violence Strategy, which would have assisted in a more realistic approach to the varied geographical landscape of Northumberland. The construction of rural is more often than not based on lived experiences; at no point in the development of the strategy were victims’ experiences of domestic violence sought. Moreover, how would the strategy impact on those who were immobile, poor and disadvantaged? Consideration of these groups

is a countywide issue rather than solely one for the more remote parts of the County; and more complex for those residing in the more extreme rural locations of Northumberland. However, this oversight by those involved in the Northumberland Strategy is not an isolated example as most policy announcements coming from central government are urban based, which means rural areas need to adapt as best they can. This can be fraught with difficulties depending on the nature of the rural area. Northumberland can be criticised for not taking on board the complex geographical nature of the County. However, rural proofing becomes an occupational hazard for rural areas having to adjust urban based policies, not just on domestic violence, to fit with local geographical complexities.

The strategic response to domestic violence in Northumberland was always going to be fraught with difficulties, as the findings highlighted. Because of the complex geographical landscape of Northumberland and the Districts having different classifications, a strategy which failed to take on board these geographical rural complexities was never going to achieve its objectives to the satisfaction of all. This alone has implications for partnership working and shows the impact rurality can have. Even attempting to introduce rural proof strategies would be problematic due to the varied classifications of rural as outlined earlier. Whilst stakeholders were aware of rural differences across the County, there was never a concerted effort to address the differences or an acknowledgement that a different approach would need to be adopted. Therefore the challenge of classifications of rural, in terms of partnerships and strategies, is getting agreement on which areas fit which classification. Nevertheless, it is fundamentally important both for partnership working and subsequent strategies that an agreement on classifications of rural can be reached; thus making the process more manageable while addressing the different aspects of rurality.

Distance and Time

The main theme which impacts on both the police and partnership working is the one of distance and time. The findings show how, for rural areas, distance and time are fundamental considerations for individuals, whether a victim of domestic violence or

a practitioner. Moreover, it can also impact on the delivery of a strategy, whether rural proofed or otherwise.

This contrasts with urban areas where distance and time are not issues that generally need consideration for stakeholders or victims of domestic violence. The findings have identified many issues which highlight how distance and time are areas of concern in rural areas. One of the main issues for stakeholders is the distance and time taken to travel to meetings or to visit clients. For stakeholders wishing to attend meetings or visit a client this can mean, in some instances, the best part of the day is taken up travelling to and from the meeting or client visit. For example, a stakeholder based in the South East of the county wishing to attend a meeting or visit a client at Berwick in the North or Hexham in the West involves a round trip of approximately one hundred miles and would take the best part of a day. This is not an efficient use of time, especially if this would have taken priority over caseload work. The visit to the client is certainly important, but the implication of distance and time restricts the stakeholder as to how often they can visit their clients, especially if they have clients in different parts of the county. The reality is therefore that it is not operationally practical in a rural area to provide the same service as an urban area due to considerations of distance and time.

The implications of distance and time for victims of domestic violence are more complex and the research has raised issues specific to rural areas. Lack of access to services has highlighted many issues for victims which may not be a consideration for those living in urban areas. In the more outlying extreme rural areas victims who may want to access a service need to consider carefully the implications. Public transport becomes a big problem if the victim does not have access to a car. In some remote rural areas public transport is none existent, or only one or two buses run a day; thus limiting the choices available to the victim. A further consideration for the victim is the opening hours of the service the victim wishes to access. Access to the service consequently may become reliant on bus timetables. Furthermore, a skeleton bus service means that it may take a full day to visit the service; which ultimately may have consequences for the victim if the perpetrator becomes suspicious of her whereabouts.

Other similarities which are reflected in the literature show how feelings of isolation by the victim can stem from the issue of distance and time (Bosch and Schuman 2004, Eastman and Bunch 2007, Gama 2000, Hayes 2007, Heist 2002, Logan et al 2001, Powe and Shaw 2004, Rawsthorne 2008, Van Hightower and Gorton 2001, Wendt 2009). For example, Eastman and Bunch (2007) found a number of issues which contributed to the isolation of victims. They found that in rural areas the demand for services outweighed the number of services that was actually available. The implication of a limited amount of services meant that victims would have to travel to more urban areas. This raised issues of lack of public transport and distance and time to and from services. Eastman and Bunch (2007) also found there was a lack of suitable housing and a tolerance to domestic violence in rural areas. This they suggest leads to a geo isolation of victims. The isolation of victims in rural areas will continue in these times of austerity with agency budgets being cut, funding streams drying up, a continued lack of social housing and public transport almost none existent in extreme rural areas.

For those victims living in farm houses in remote locations, public transport is often non existent and the nearest bus stop over a mile away. Furthermore, the remote location of farm houses can mean the perpetrator can abuse his partner in the knowledge that no one will hear the victims scream for help, as documented in studies by Hornosty and Doherty 2001, Murty 2003, Wendt 2009. This isolation can be further exacerbated as the victim is fully aware that if she manages to call the police, distance will determine that the response time is not going to be swift. Time is certainly a major factor. If there is a delay in police response then there is a strong possibility that the victim maybe reluctant to make the call for help, in the knowledge that the incident will be over and the perpetrator having left the scene (Gilling and Pierpoint 1999, Mawby 2006). This situation is exacerbated by more rural police stations having restricted opening hours, with the nearest staffed station twenty or thirty miles or more away.

The decision to leave an abusive relationship, as the literature suggests, is not a straightforward process with the victim having to consider many complex issues. Included in this is that the woman may actually wish the relationship to continue, an

awareness that the violence can escalate after an initial separation and an economic consideration; especially if the woman is financially dependent on the abusive partner (Anderson 2003, Campbell et al 2003, Johnson and Hutton 2003). However, rurality, distance and time are additional considerations which make the decision making process more complicated. In rural Northumberland there is one refuge situated in the South East of the County with only eight bed spaces available. Even if there were more spaces available the distance a victim may need to travel to access the refuge could be 50 – 60 miles. Bearing in mind the discussion above regarding public transport, the refuge, as respondents mentioned, is not a practical option for some victims. If the refuge is not a practical option due to distance and time, the next option of Local Authority housing is also beset with problems. The availability of Local Authority housing in rural areas is at a premium with options limited due to distance and time, and availability in small rural areas. In most cases the availability of decent Local Authority housing in rural areas is very limited and in the majority of cases are sort after properties.

The issues in relation to rurality, distance and time show how the location of meetings, clients, services, refuge provision and remote rural households all impact on stakeholders' working practices and the victims' experience of domestic violence services. These issues also have wider implications for partnership working. If extreme rural areas are not to benefit from general strategic initiatives because of the issues identified, the question is how can this be rectified? One way of alleviating the problem would be for the employment of a rural co-ordinator, whose main remit would be to visit intermediate and extreme rural areas, once the classifications of rural had been agreed. This would provide an opportunity to open a channel of communication with service providers, victims of domestic violence and the local police in an effort to gauge the needs of victims and assess how rurality is impacting upon them and how these issues can be reflected in the overall strategy. This process should not solely rely upon a series of rural partnership meetings, as this would merely replicate the known problems of distance and time. However, it is recognised that this would mean that the co-ordinator would have to spend a lot of time travelling between meetings with individuals. Whilst this may be seen as an expensive investment it is a small price to pay if those who reside in intermediate and extreme

rural areas are to be represented and appropriate action taken at a strategic level.

Cultural Differences

The final theme to materialise revolves around cultural differences that emphasise the distinct nature of the rural community. The first area of exploration is the impact close knit communities have on victims' experiences of domestic violence. Close knit communities were shown to have both a positive and a negative impact on a victim of domestic violence. The positive impact was that close knit communities could be very supportive, understanding and helpful. This network of support can be very reassuring for a victim of domestic violence. The other side of the coin is that a close knit community can be parochial to the extent that everyone knows each others' business (Garland and Chakraborti 2007, Rawsthorne 2008, Wendt 2009, Williams 1999). Victims can be reluctant to confide that they are suffering from abuse in case this becomes common knowledge. The smaller the town or village, the more pronounced this problem becomes.

Power within small rural communities can often lie in the hands of a few; the policeman, vicar, landowner, local councillor or GP (Little 2002, Woods 1997). In close knit communities this can impact on a victim's decision whether to disclose the abuse. In a small community, where everyone is known to each other, the relationship between the victim, the perpetrator and the person in a 'powerful position' will affect the capacity of the victim to disclose abuse. This scenario was recalled by a victim in Chapter 5 who was fearful of disclosing the abuse she was suffering because her husband was seen as a pillar of the community. Further consideration needs to be given to the culture of rural communities, which is underpinned by patriarchal structures which is no different to more urbanised areas (Dobash and Dobash 1992, Walby 1990). However, because of the closeness and power structures in small communities, lack of services and lack of public transport (Eastman and Bunch 2007, Gama 2000, Logan Walker and Levkefeld 2007, Van Hightower and Gorton 2001) there is little or no escape from entrenched patriarchal structures. Therefore, they become deep seated and an acceptable way of life. In more urban areas access to services, shops and cultural entertainment can provide respite from patriarchal

dominance. However, this is not true for those victims who are isolated in their home. The social isolation of victims in rural areas, coupled with the nature of close knit communities and rural power structures, all form part of a distinct cultural rurality which add to the intricate web of difficulties facing victims of domestic violence. The social isolation of victims should be identified when a framework of classifications of rurality takes place; thus enabling an inclusive strategic response to domestic violence to be formulated. Moreover, it would allow partners to understand the difficulties of rural social exclusion and act accordingly in bringing about change.

There are those who suggest there is a 'rural patriarchy' based around lifestyle and beliefs (Fiswick 1998), family and community in which women distance themselves from feminism (Sachs 1996) and the main role for rural women is domestic work (Little 2006, Middleton 1986, Panelli 2006, Stebbing 1984). However, these traits, I suggest, could be applied to women in urban areas especially in terms of domestic work, beliefs and lifestyle. Whilst domestic work may differ in rural areas, an example being farm related work, they are still undertaking domestic work.

Acknowledging that patriarchy is both a rural and urban phenomenon (Dobash and Dobash 1992, Walby 1990), the research revealed the disrespectful way some men addressed their partners in rural areas. It also indicated that they were 'unconstructed' males from a bygone era. This was reflected in terms used by males to refer to their partner such as 'beasts' and 'captures;' words associated with a bygone era. Whilst never acceptable it does give some indication of the mindset of certain males, and their attitudes towards women in rural parts of Northumberland. The patriarchal nature of rural areas seemed to be ingrained and reflected in how the countryside power relations rest in the hands of the few such as the landowner, vicar, the local councillor, GP and the local policemen.

Little (2002) also suggests there is another type of power that is intertwined with patriarchy; which is a one of class. Class for Little (2002) reinforces the importance of the family and the role of women within the unit. This is the same for urban areas. However, because of the close knit nature of rural communities this means power structures of landlords, vicar and local councillors are more intimate due to small number of residents. Therefore, the intimate nature of the power structures underpins

the class and patriarchal fabric of rurality. Furthermore, farmers and landowners more often than not control housing and labour markets, especially in the more intermediate and extreme rural areas; thus making conformity to rural norms essential for those who rely on these power brokers for employment and housing.

The implication of these cultural differences for policy makers raises a number of questions. The core issues of patriarchal power structures, the parochial nature of the countryside and ‘unconstructed’ males provide difficult hurdles to overcome if domestic violence related policies are to be effective. Therefore, further exploration of how these core issues associated with rurality are tackled needs to be undertaken.

Future Implications

The thesis has shown that the rural experience impacts significantly on domestic violence which is important for a wider audience. In terms of policy, both past and present, consideration needs to be given to the rural geography and how this impacts on stakeholders and victims. The policy of bus deregulation in the mid 1980's was ideologically driven but as this thesis has shown the long term impact on rural areas means there is a skeleton service, if any at all, dictated by the non-profitability of rural public transport. Subsequently, leaving those victims who have no access to private transport somewhat isolated. The thesis has shown that in rural areas decent Local Authority housing is at a premium. The last Labour government policy of stock transfer of Local Authority housing to the private sector has considerably reduced suitable Local Authority housing for victims of domestic violence. Rural victims of domestic violence, as evidenced in this thesis, suffer more than their urban counterparts, in relation to transport and accommodation. However, more contemporary policy will further oppress rural victims of domestic violence.

The location of police stations and police call out times in rural areas is likely to become worse in these times of austerity. Further closures or restricted opening times will mean victims of domestic violence will suffer secondary victimisation, as in the more outlying rural areas an immediate police response to a victim's call for assistance will be almost impracticable. It will also mean that there is a reduced

police presence in rural communities; thus making active participation in local partnerships more difficult. If the more senior officers are urban based then distance and time will become a factor which will impact on a 'hands on' contribution to more rural domestic violence partnership initiatives.

In terms of partnership working, the public sector cut-backs will also impact on how partnerships in general, but more specifically domestic violence partnerships, continue to respond to victim's needs. A more centralised approach and a reduction in staff could be a 'double whammy' which affects victims of domestic violence especially in rural areas. The closing of local offices means a reduction in services but also, as with the police, important personnel being based in a central location, holding an increased workload with little or no time to contribute to rural domestic violence partnerships. As the findings showed, some attendees at Forums did not hold a domestic violence remit but undertook the task as an add-on to their everyday job. This will become more of a reality the harder the cuts bite. The closure of services will also hit rural areas harder. The literature and findings show the decline, or non existence, of services in rural areas which has accelerated in recent years. This trend will continue which will further isolate victims of domestic violence. Funding cuts will also mean that voluntary sector providers will experience the drying up of funding streams; meaning cuts in the service they provide or ultimately closure. The research showed that the sole providers of services for domestic violence victims in rural Northumberland came from the voluntary sector. A reduction in voluntary sector service provision will once again hit rural areas the hardest. The literature reviewed in Chapter 3 showed the problems associated with partnership working, but it will become more fragmented and ineffectual, especially in rural areas, if relevant organisations no longer exist and domestic violence is no longer seen as a priority.

Although there have been significant legislative changes in relation to domestic violence, most notably the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004, the policy issues highlighted show neglect for female victimisation and especially the rural victims of domestic violence. The impact on rural women suffering from domestic violence means their lives are constrained to the home, which leaves them more susceptible to abuse. Whilst not deriding the advances made in tackling

domestic violence, the rural geography of setting and place determines the impact of not just of domestic violence related policy but policy in general. The nature of which condemns rural victims of domestic violence to secondary victimisation.

Conclusion

The findings have shown that rurality impacts on the response to domestic violence which in turn contributes to our criminological knowledge. My findings have related to the difficulties faced by stakeholders providing a partnership response to domestic violence, and how victims' experiences are influenced by rurality. Moreover, before undertaking strategic initiatives in rural areas there needs to be a clear classification of rural and how this relates to the geographical landscape. The themes discussed at the beginning of this chapter can become part of a framework which will assist and inform future rural responses to domestic violence. They also provide a foundation on which further research can be undertaken. Moreover, the framework of classifications of rural would also assist in determining how rurality is defined for a given geographical area. In conclusion, my research indicates that further research into the impact rurality has on victims and responses to domestic violence is necessary to further enhance our criminological knowledge and shine a light into an area, which like domestic violence itself, has remained hidden for too long.

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